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THE

WORKS

Of the late

Reverend and Learned

Mr. *Joseph Stennett.*

VOL. III.

Containing TWELVE SERMONS, never before publiſhed.

WITH

An ALPHABETICAL INDEX of Matters.

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PROPERTY OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL

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PROPERTY OF PRINCETON

SERMON I.

The unreaſonableneſs and danger of following a multitude to do evil conſidered.

Preach'd at *PINNERS-HALL*, December 2, 1704.

EXOD. xxiii. 2.

The former part of the verſe.

Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

THE light of nature teaches men to ſeek ſociety one with another, and to be impatient in a ſtate of ſolitude: and in order to enjoy the advantages of community, they naturally deſire to be formed into order, that they may have the benefit of ſome kind of go-

vernment and regularity among themſelves. But tho theſe are great advantages when duly improved, they are very prejudicial when they are abuſed. There is no deſire more natural and neceſſary to men than that of being happy; and yet none is more abuſed than this, becauſe moſt men ſeek happineſs in the pleaſures of ſin: but that is not where it ought to be expected, or where it ever will be effectually found. And ſo in ſeeking the benefits and advantages of ſociety, of order, and government, the corrupt nature of men engages them to purſue things in ſuch a manner as that they augment their guilt, and likewiſe their miſery, inſtead of alleviating it: for while they avoid ſolitude, and delight themſelves in ſociety, they are ready to *follow the multitude to do evil*; and while they ſeek the advantage of order, and government, inſtead of regular ſubmiſſion to their ſuperiors, they often yield themſelves up to be governed by them after ſuch a manner as is inconſiſtent with their allegiance to the ſupreme Being. They devote their conſciences to them; in which ſort they ought not *to be the ſervants of men* [a]. They make them lords of their faith, and of their conſciences, and obey them in ſuch inſtances wherein their obedience to men is inconſiſtent with what they owe to God.

[a] 1 Cor. 7. 23.

In oppoſition to this great evil, the words of our text, and thoſe which follow in the ſame verſe, are fixed as ſtanding rules. *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil:* we are not to be ſo complaiſant to mankind as to follow great numbers in any thing that is evil. *Neither ſhalt thou ſpeak in a cauſe to decline after many to wreſt judgment:* we ought not to have ſuch complaiſance for evil governors, or for falſe witneſſes, as to join with them in perverting and wreſting of judgment. This latter word *many*, is the ſame in the original [b] with the former. But ſome interpret both to ſignify great perſons in quality, as well as a great number of people. Some interpret the former part to relate preciſely to a *multitude* of people; but think that the latter word tranſlated *many*, ſignifies the mighty, or governors: *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak in a cauſe to incline after the mighty*, or governors, *to wreſt judgment.* Perhaps theſe words may be accommodated to both, ſtrictly ſpeaking: and then two of the greateſt prejudices, and the moſt pernicious in the world, are forbidden thereby. We are not to incline either after *the multitude*; or after *the mighty*, after thoſe who have power, who are perſons of authority, of quality and rank, to do any thing that is evil. There is nothing more common in the world than the tranſgreſſion of this precept: therefore I think hardly any thing to be

[b] רבים.

more uſeful than to eſtabliſh the truth and the reaſonableneſs of it; I mean, of the precept, in oppoſition to the vice that is ſo common, and of which few men are intirely freed.

Theſe words were given by God to Moſes, when he was revealing his mind to the Jews: and they are a part of that law, which, if well-obſerved by them, would have made them appear to be a wiſe people in the eyes of all nations in the world, as well as have promoted holineſs and religion amongſt them in ſuch a manner as to have ſecured to them the divine favour. After the giving the decalogue, or ten commandments upon mount Sinai, with an audible voice from heaven, which diſtinguiſhed it from all other laws; God was pleaſed to give a body of laws, which were partly an inculcation of the ten precepts, and partly an explication of them; partly ceremonial, which God thought fit then to eſtabliſh; and partly what were called judicial, ſtrictly relating to the Jewiſh polity, and ſuited to the circumſtances they were to be in in the land of Canaan. Theſe laſt cannot be accommodated to people under other circumſtances; as, the way appointed for mortgaging and releaſing of eſtates, the way of ſetting their ſervants at liberty, or continuing them in their ſervice; and divers things of this kind, which could ſuit no nation in the world but themſelves.

The

The words of our text are a part of a moral law. They are a rule given, which may direct not only in matters of judgment, and of the conduct of civil life; but in especial manner in matters of religion and conscience. And it is evident, that the principal design of forbidding us *to follow a multitude to do evil*, is, not merely to signify that it is imprudent to follow a multitude to engage in vulgar errors, to bring any disadvantage upon ourselves; but to let us know that it is criminal to follow a multitude to commit a moral evil, to do any thing which is sinful. Every one who hath the exercise of reason, must needs grant that this rule is a moral one; that it is founded upon the moral law: for, *sin is the transgression of the law* [c]; and this forbids us to commit sin upon any account whatsoever, let the pretence be ever so specious; suffers us not to imagine that it will be any excuse to us that a multitude of people do the same thing, or that rulers and governors do the same thing, or require us to do it. The law of God is against this: for sin, which is absolutely sinful, that is evil in itself; and all the numbers, or power in the world, can never make it innocent, or make it change its nature, so as that we should not become criminal if we commit it.

[c] 1 John 3. 4.

This is a rule that is conſtant and ſtanding in all times and ſeaſons. No-body can be ſo abſurd as to imagine, that it is leſs criminal to *follow a multitude to do evil* now, than it was when theſe precepts were firſt delivered by the hand of Moſes to the people of Iſrael. The difference betwixt virtue and vice, good and evil, is ſtill the ſame. Therefore this is a perpetual rule, and ought to guide and govern us in all ſeaſons and generations of the world; and will be a ſtanding precept for ever, as being founded upon the juſt conſideration of the nature of God, and the neceſſary difference betwixt good and evil.

So much therefore may ſuffice as to the nature of this precept, and the obligation of it. That which I promiſe myſelf to do upon this text, is,

I. To explain it more particularly.
II. To ſhew the neceſſity of ſuch a precept; the great need that this people, and indeed all the world, have of it.
III. To ſhew the juſtice and reaſonableneſs of it. And then,
IV. To make ſome improvement.

I. Having given you the general ſcope of the precept, I would explain it to you a little more particularly. And we may take notice both of the form and matter of it.

1. Of

1. Of the form of it. And here we may obſerve,

(1.) That it is a negative precept. And ſuch are moſt of the precepts of the decalogue. God forbids ſuch and ſuch ſins; and this is to raiſe a becoming horror in our minds at the thoughts of evil. This is a very inſtructive and pathetic manner of enjoining precepts. It is a fainter and colder way of giving laws to ſay, thou ſhalt preſerve the life of thy neighbour, or thou ſhalt do juſtice to thy neighbour; tho this comprehends that we are not to kill or to ſteal. But *thou ſhalt not kill*, or, *thou ſhalt not ſteal*; this is ſtriking immediately upon the thing, and pointing at it, ſo as no man can excuſe himſelf, or ſay he does not underſtand the meaning or extent of ſuch a precept. So here, *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.* Indeed the ſubſtance of this we have in divers poſitive laws of God. As, when the Lord commands us to own him to be our God, and to worſhip him: the having him wholly for our God, comprehends in it that we ſhould pay him ſo great a reſpect as never to make others lords of our conſciences, or bring others in competition with him. To *follow a multitude*, or follow great men *to do evil*; this would be to tranſgreſs the law, which forbids us to have any other gods beſides him. But now tho that be comprehended in it, yet this comes more directly to the particular caſe. That law which

commands us to worſhip God, ſhews that we are not to pay ſuch adoration and reverence to men as *to follow* them *to do evil*, which is to act contrary to God to pleaſe them: but our text is a more expreſs and particular declaration of the divine will in this reſpect. 'Tis a good general rule, that thoſe laws which preſcribe duties to us, forbid the contrary ſins; and thoſe laws which forbid evil, preſcribe the contrary duties. So here, when we are bid *not to follow a multitude to do evil*, we are to conceive that this doth comprehend in it that we are to perform all thoſe duties which are contrary to the ſin here prohibited; that we are to love God, to adore and glorify him, to be governed by him, by truth and reaſon, againſt all authority, againſt all numbers whatſoever. So that you ſee this law is very comprehenſive, if we will take it in its due latitude: and God diſcovers his will in it in a very expreſs manner.

(2.) Another thing to be obſerved in the form of this precept is, that it is given directly to every ſingle perſon; not only in general to men, you ſhall not do ſo, but *thou ſhalt not*. No man may excuſe himſelf, and think either that he is too great, as being a magiſtrate; or too little, or deſpicable, as being of no account and conſequence in the world in compariſon of others, and ſo is not reach'd by this law. 'Tis ſo expreſſed, leſt any man ſhould ſay, "I am

"ſo

" ſo ignorant, and have ſo few means of " knowledge and inſtruction, that I muſt " follow a multitude; I have no other rule " to go by: leſt any ſhould ſay, I have not " the opportunities and advantages for the " direction of my conſcience as others have, " therefore I think it ſafeſt to follow my " leaders and governors, and to be directed " by them in this matter; and I hope God " will not be extreme to mark my iniquities, " becauſe I am under ſo many diſadvantages, " and can't examine and look into things ſo " ſtrictly as others." All theſe kinds of excuſes are prevented by the terms of the law, *Thou ſhalt not.* As the prophet ſpeaks to David, when he lays his ſin before him, *Thou art the man* [d]; ſo when God ſets this precept before us, I may ſay to every one of you, thou art the perſon to whom God ſpeaks: neither thou, nor thou, nor any of you, may tranſgreſs this law upon any pretence whatſoever; none of you may *follow a multitude to do evil.*

2. We are to conſider the matter of the precept. And here I muſt explain to you what is ſignified by *doing of evil*; what by *the multitude*; and what by *following a multitude.*

(1.) What is ſignified by *doing of evil.* You know that there are two ſorts of evils, the evil of ſin, and the evil of puniſhment;

[d] 2 Sam. 12. 7.

one

one is called moral, and the other penal evil. It is evident that it is moral evil which is ſpoken againſt in our text. It may be lawful to follow a multitude of rulers, or governors, in inflicting puniſhments when they are juſt. So that there is no pretence in the world that this can ſignify any other than moral evil. The word in the original [e] is *in evil*, or *evils*: and ſo the Septuagint [f] render it, *Thou ſhalt not be after many in evil*, or *in wickedneſs*: *in evil*; that is, in ſin, in doing of evil, in doing that which is contrary to the divine rule which God hath preſcribed.

Now the ſenſe of it, according to this explication, muſt be to this purpoſe: *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude* to commit any ſin; whether this ſin be what they call a ſin of commiſſion, or of omiſſion; whether it be to do that which God forbids, or to omit doing that which God commands. *Sin is the tranſgreſſion of the law* [g]. This is a good definition of it which the apoſtle hath given us. And this regards not only our external behaviour, but the internal government of ourſelves. We are not to follow a multitude in our belief, in our notions, in the doctrines or principles which we embrace, if they are evil, if they are erroneous, if they are wrong; any more than we are to follow a multitude in doing a criminal action which is openly done by them.

[e] לרעת
[f] Οὐκ ἔσῃ μετὰ πλειόνων ἐπὶ κακίᾳ.
[g] 1 John 3. 4.

This, moreover, hath regard to every part of our duty in reſpect of the ſeveral objects to which it more immediately refers. Some ſins are more directly committed againſt God; ſome againſt ourſelves; and ſome againſt our neighbour. We are not to follow a multitude in any thing that is contrary to piety, in the ſervice and reſpect which we owe to God. We are not to follow a multitude in any thing that is contrary to temperance, ſobriety, and chaſtity, in oppoſition to the laws of God, which are given for the government of ourſelves. We are not to follow a multitude in any thing that is contrary to juſtice and charity: we are not to follow them in oppoſition to any of thoſe duties which God hath preſcribed for the conduct of ourſelves aright towards our fellow-creatures, whether they are our equals, ſuperiors, or inferiors. In a word, in any thing that is evil; in any thing that is ſinful, we are not to follow a multitude. That is the ſenſe of the text with reſpect to the *evil* there ſpoken of.

(2.) As for *the multitude*, you ſee it is indefinitely delivered; there is no certain number of men repreſented to us whom we may, or may not follow. But let the multitude be leſſer or greater, let it be a community of what number ſoever; we are not to follow the greater part in doing any thing that is a ſin. Let it be mankind in general; you are not to follow the greateſt numbers of

of nations, the moſt numerous ſocieties of men, to do any thing that is evil. And, as I intimated to you before, that ſome interpret it of the mighty, the men of quality, rulers, judges, or princes, who have a multiplied power and authority; we are not to follow theſe in doing of evil. Indeed there is much the ſame reaſon for the one as for the other: and I may have occaſion to touch upon this as well as that, in the treating of this matter; tho my principal deſign is to diſcourſe of the text according to the ſenſe given by our tranſlators, that being the moſt ſimple, and therefore ſeeming to be the moſt genuine expoſition. If you aſk,

(3.) What it is *to follow a multitude?* It is in the original, [h] *Thou ſhalt not be after a multitude*; and the Septuagint [i] render it, *Thou ſhalt not be with the multitude:* but the ſenſe is much the ſame. We are not to *follow* them, to *attend or wait upon* them, as ſervants do upon their maſters; for this is a poſture of ſpecial reſpect and reverence. We are not to wait upon them as the pſalmiſt ſays he would wait upon God: *As the eyes of ſervants look unto the hand of their maſter, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her miſtreſs; ſo our eyes wait upon the Lord our God* [k]. We are not to pay them ſuch reſpect and deference as to wait upon them,

[h] אחרי־רבים
[i] μετὰ πλειόνων.
[k] Pſal. 123. 1.

to ſerve them in any of their deſigns, when they are contrary to truth and holineſs, when they are evil. To *follow them*, or to go after them, may ſignify our accompanying of them in any thing that is criminal. We are not to hearken to the voice of ſinners, as the wiſe man repreſents thieves and murderers tempting others: *Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cauſe: let us ſwallow them up alive, as the grave, and whole, as thoſe that go down into the pit: we ſhall find all precious ſubſtance, we ſhall fill our houſes with ſpoil: caſt in thy lot among us, let us all have one purſe.* To which he ſubjoins his religious counſel: *My ſon, if ſinners entice thee, conſent thou not. Walk not thou in the way with them: refrain thy foot from their path* [1]. We are not to accompany a great multitude in doing any thing that is evil. Moreover, *following* may ſignify imitation of them. We are not to take them for our pattern, but avoid them and their evil practices with the greateſt care and diligence. In ſhort, we are not to ſerve any one in bringing about any evil matter, in tranſgreſſing any law of God. We are not to be the ſervants or companions of any in the perpetration of ſin, or take them for our pattern who walk contrary to the law of God.

So that the ſum of the matter is this: we are every one of us forbidden by this pre-

[1] Prov. 1. 10——15.

cept

cept to follow ever ſo great a multitude, or to accompany them or ſerve them in doing any thing that is contrary to the law of God: I ſay, in any inſtance whatſoever we are not to break any one law of God, in complaiſance even to the greateſt multitude of men.

Having thus explain'd the words, I proceed,

II. To diſcourſe of the great neceſſity of this law; how needful it was that God ſhould give ſuch a precept as this, and that he ſhould give it in ſo expreſs a manner. The laws of men are calculated according to their preſent exigences, and they ſeldom ſee far before them: therefore it hath been often obſerved, amongſt the wiſeſt nations, that ſome caſes have ſtarted up, againſt which their laws did not provide; they did not imagine that ſuch and ſuch crimes would have been committed, and therefore there were no laws formed againſt ſuch as ſhould perpetrate them. But God's law is perfect: he knows all the ſprings and motions of our ſouls, and therefore hath provided againſt all the ſins which the children of men are capable of committing: and we ſhall evidently ſee, if we will obſerve human nature, how great need there is of this law.

1. By reaſon of the extenſiveneſs of the vice which it prohibits. For is there any thing in the world more commonly committed, and in which people more eaſily

ſatisfy

ſatisfy themſelves, than that ſin againſt which this law is directed? Is any thing more common in the world than for men to govern themſelves by the multitude in their actions, and in their cuſtoms, and in their thoughts and opinions, both in matters of reaſon and trade, and in matters of religion too? Abundance of people are of certain common opinions, in ordinary and indifferent things, which have no relation to vice or virtue, merely becauſe they have heard ſo and ſo. It is the opinion that hath been conſtantly retained: they believe things which they ſee other people generally believe: and if you would aſk them any farther reaſon, as, ſuppoſe you would philoſophize about the frame of things, or the nature of this world; and aſk them, why they entertain ſuch a received opinion about theſe things, they can render no other reaſon than that they have heard ſo, and then find that other people generally believe it. Thus they do in things relating to human life; thus they diſpoſe of their trade and buſineſs: the government of their families, the œconomy of their houſes is managed ſuch and ſuch a way; not becauſe this is better than any other way, but the chief reaſon is, becauſe others have done ſo before them, and they would never give themſelves the trouble to examine whether things could be managed after a better manner or not. How many nations are there,

which

which have very fooliſh and troubleſome cuſtoms, which they retain, and would be very jealous if any ſhould go to change and alter them; and yet they have no reaſon in the world to keep them, but only becauſe they have been accuſtomed to them; they have been uſed to ſuch and ſuch ways in the management of their land, their families, and the dreſſing of their food. Even in ſuch ordinary things as theſe, they will by no means in the world change from a bad cuſtom to a good. Tho their ſenſes tell them another is a better cuſtom, yet they will by no means alter, becauſe it has been the uſage of their anceſtors, and is the cuſtom of their nation. So fooliſh is the generality of mankind! And this were the leſs to be minded, if it were only in ſuch common and ordinary things: but when it comes to the matter of right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice; for men then to govern themſelves by cuſtom, by the common opinions, without any manner of examination; this is a lamentation, and ought to be for a lamentation. It is the great ſource and ſpring of much vice, a prejudice deeply rooted in the minds of men, and hard to be extirpated out of them. And ſhould this unaccountable conduct be only found amongſt the more ignorant ſort of people, and thoſe who appear leſs concerned for religion; there would not be ſo great need for the lamentation as really there is. But how many argue after

ſuch

ſuch a manner in their minds, nay, have not ſcrupled to do it with their lips too, who yet have been under the ſtrict profeſſion of religion? How often have they thought that they have ſufficiently anſwered ſome doctrines and truths which have been confirmed to them by good reaſons and proofs, by ſaying there are a great many good men on the ſide of that opinion they hold, when, on the other ſide, there are but a-few; and that certainly if this had been a truth, a great many would have known and profeſs'd it? As if truth was always on the ſide of the multitude, and as if they were ſafe when they had numbers on their ſide; or as if God had not, in the moſt expreſs terms, diſcovered his diſlike of ſuch a way of reaſoning, by giving ſuch a law as is recorded in our text, that they *ſhould not follow a multitude to do evil.* I do not doubt but every one of you, upon reflection, will find that this is the common way of mens reaſoning, and their actions are guided after this manner. For how few can give any other reaſon why they do ſuch and ſuch things, but becauſe they find others do ſo. Not only do they take their innocent cuſtoms from others, but even thoſe which are criminal; and they will do thus becauſe the multitude do it. Indeed it would be a vain affectation of ſingularity for people to diſtinguiſh themſelves from others by their habit or ſpeech. We ſhould accommodate ourſelves to mankind

as far as innocently we may, that we may not appear wild and barbarous to them. But we are not to imitate them in their exceſſes, in their follies, in their vices: we are not to comply with the multitude in theſe things, tho we may in thoſe which are innocent; that we may have the fairer opportunity to do ſervice to their ſouls, and make the light of our holy religion ſhine by our converſations among them.

But let us a little inquire into times paſt, as well as what we have obſerved in our own time; and we ſhall find that not only in this, but in other ages of the world, the ſame vain prejudice hath prevailed and governed the minds of the generality of people, to *follow a multitude to do evil.* After ſin entred into the world, it was not much to be wondred at that there were few people reformed; and that God never had ſo great a number of people in the world as the devil had in his kingdom. *The whole world lies in wickedneſs* [m], ſays the apoſtle; in the primitive times, when there were great converſions wrought. And what is it that hath all along confirmed the wicked in their prejudices? They would *follow the multitude*; they would follow the greateſt numbers. If any queſtion aroſe concerning truth, it muſt be determined by the numbers which have been found on the one

[m] 1 John 5. 19.

ſide,

ſide, or on the other: and where the greateſt numbers have been found, there the perſons examining have imagin'd that truth was to be found. It is true, there is ſomething in the minds of men; ſome light, ſome knowledge, which hath oftentimes convinc'd them that the multitude was in the wrong in ſuch and ſuch inſtances. But even then they have ſuffered themſelves to be drawn along by the multitude, and carried away with the tide; ſuffered themſelves to be led into deſtruction, becauſe they have imagined there was at leaſt ſome ſort of ſafety in following the multitude.

How numerous were the perſons of the old world who were vicious, and how few who were righteous? Very few men were remarkable as Abel; and as Enoch, who *walked with God* [n]. But *all fleſh had corrupted his way upon earth* [o]. This was the complaint from heaven of the miſerable degeneracy and corruption of mankind. Noah might preach 120 years, yet but few people would hearken to him. They thought it was beſt and ſafeſt to *follow the multitude*, tho it were in the commiſſion of evil. Who would follow Abram when he *left his country, and his father's houſe* [p]? There is no great doubt but Abram was zealous for the truth he had embraced, and would willingly have carried ſome of his family, ſome of his

[n] Gen. 5. 22.
[o] *Chap.* 6. 12.
[p] Gen. 12. 1.

country along with him: but what determined them? Abram's arguments would not prevail upon them to follow him; but the multitude, the cuſtoms of their fathers, their anceſtors, their traditions, and their great company, theſe determined their thoughts.

When God was pleaſed by ſo many judgments, by ſuch appearances of power and glory, and by his conſtant miraculous preſence in the temple to eſtabliſh his worſhip among the Jews; all the nations round about trembled and feared when they heard of theſe mighty things: they could not but be convinced that this was the great and true God; at leaſt great numbers of them. Curioſity could bring the queen of Sheba from the remoteſt parts of the earth to hear the wiſdom of Solomon: but how few among the heathens would come to the worſhip of God among the Jews? Here and there one devout and pious ſoul, who would not be led by tradition and cuſtom, but would examine and ſearch into the truth of things, reſolved to ſeek for the true God and his worſhip, how far ſoever he was carried, and to whatſoever inconveniences he might be expoſed in ſeeking after him: there were ſome therefore who joined themſelves unto the Lord and his worſhip. And what determined theſe men? They would *not follow the multitude to do evil.* But for the generality, it was impoſſible to perſuade them. They would not forſake their idols, their vanities:

not

not all the miracles which were wrought could get them off from *following the multitude to do evil.* They could argue after this manner: theſe Jews live upon a very little part of the world; they profeſs to be againſt idolatry, and to worſhip the true God; and there are great and wonderful works wrought to confirm that religion which they profeſs: but can theſe few people, who live upon ſuch a little ſpot of ground, be wiſer than all the world? Do we not ſee all nations worſhiping the ſun, moon, and ſtars? Have not all nations theſe gods? and ſhall we believe theſe few people in oppoſition to this multitude? Shall we follow them in their laws againſt all the nations in the world? A very popular argument! and muſt needs have determined the thoughts of abundance of people to whom the knowledge of theſe things came. And when the force of conviction came ſtrong on the minds of others, they were unwilling to enter upon a new profeſſion of religion alone: and ſince their families, and relations, and neighbours, could not be engaged to become Jews too, they choſe to keep with the largeſt company; and would *follow the* idolatrous *multitude*, tho it were *to do* ſo much *evil.*

When the people of Iſrael themſelves were corrupted by idolatry, when they entertained the gods of the nations amongſt them; how do you imagine that they were drawn off ſo

generally from the worſhip of the true God, notwithſtanding all the light they had, and all the wonders their fathers had told them of? Why, truly they would be like other nations; they would not be ſingular: they found other nations worſhiped images, and ſet up altars under every ſpreading tree; and therefore they would be like them: they would *follow the multitude to do evil.* When the ten tribes were conſcious to themſelves it was a great evil to ſet up idols, and to worſhip them; when Jeruſalem was known to be the place appointed for worſhip, and yet in oppoſition hereto Jeroboam ſet up golden calves in Dan and Bethel, and ordered that the feaſt ſhould be changed to another time than God had preſcribed; ſome few of the Iſraelites would go to Jeruſalem to worſhip [q]. But how do you think they were laughed at by the reſt? how were they perſecuted; and what arguments can you imagine were uſed with them? "Will you "be wiſer than the reſt? Do you think that "Judah and Benjamin are in the right; that "theſe two tribes are in the right, when here "are ten tribes of another mind?" Conſtant obſervation teaches us how prevalent this way of arguing is amongſt the people. When the two tribes were corrupted in like manner by idolatry, no doubt but this principle had a great hand in leading them to it, and after-

[q] 1 Kings 12. 27——33.

wards

wards confirming them therein. " Shall we " be wiſer than our brethren, the ten tribes? " Why ſhould we not have ſuch groves, and " ſuch ceremonies and worſhip as they, and " all the nations round about us? Is it not " better to follow the multitude?" When eminent prophets came amongſt them, and told them of their ſins, and endeavoured to reform the people; yet they would be as the nations round about them: they hated to be reform'd. *As for the word of the Lord*, ſay they, *we will not do it.* And why? Becauſe they would be like the heathens, their neighbours, who were round about them. When a few adhered to the prophets, to any prophet whom God raiſed up amongſt them; how do you imagine they were deſpiſed by the reſt, that they would be ſo ſingular, and ſet up for the knowledge of the truth, in oppoſition to the principles and practices of the multitude? So that this *following the multitude to do evil*, in both reſpects, whether great numbers, or rulers and great men, they generally go together.

Was it not thus when our Saviour appeared upon earth? When ſuch mighty miracles were wrought by him, and ſuch an evidence and authority attended his preaching, one would wonder that the people ſhould oppoſe ſuch light as this. But what was the argument? *Have any of the rulers, or of the Phariſees, believed on him*[r]*?* " Here

[r] John 7. 48.

" is one pretends to be the Meſſias; he is " neither a great man himſelf, nor hath he " a great number of diſciples who have em- " braced his doctrine, and wait upon him " at his appearing. There are a few indeed " who follow him; but what are theſe in " compariſon to all the people of this na- " tion?" A very popular pretence to keep the people from embracing the truth! When the apoſtles preached, after the aſcenſion of our bleſſed Saviour; what was to be expected by them, notwithſtanding all the miracles they wrought, and in the face of the people of ſo many nations? Tho the goſpel they heard, was preached by illiterate men in ſuch various languages ſo miraculouſly; did the generality embrace it? No: there were ſome believed the goſpel; but ſo few, that the prophet foreſeeing it, cries out, *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed* [r]? The generality would *follow the multitude to do evil.* Many people were touched when they ſaw Chriſt's miracles: but when it comes to a popular vote, whether he ſhould be put to death, or ſaved alive; what was the voice of the multitude but *crucify him, crucify him* [s]? They would follow the great men, and the greateſt numbers: and ſince there were but few who adhered to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; therefore they would not be on his ſide.

[r] Iſa. 53. 1. | [s] Luke 23. 21.

And

And the apoſtles, how were they deſpiſed when they travelled to ſpread the goſpel? Some few indeed were converted; but what were theſe in compariſon of thoſe who remained in infidelity? They ſaw the miracles of the apoſtles; they heard them preach; they were ſurprized and amazed. But when they came to determine, ſhall we hearken to theſe truths? ſhall we believe the doctrine of a crucified Jeſus, and the doctrine of his reſurrection? ſhall we forſake our vices, and walk after the pattern of Chriſt? "No: we "will not be determined by theſe few men. "Can it be imagined that all the reſt of man- "kind are in an error; that all the princes "and philoſophers in the world, and almoſt "all the people too, are in an error? No: "we will not believe the doctrine of theſe few "men, who pretend to know more than all "the world beſides." How often was this objected to the apoſtles themſelves? How often, I ſay, objected to them? And how often did men determine to remain in their evil practices, and to retain their evil cuſtoms, for no other reaſon but becauſe they would *follow the multitude?* And as it was in their day, ſo it hath been ever ſince. If any reformation has ſtarted up in the world in any particular nation, then this has been the language, this has been the vogue of the people; "are you wiſer than all mankind be- "ſides?" without taking the pains to examine into things. "This has determined them: "the

" the greater number is moſt likely to be in " the right; and therefore as it is the moſt " ſafe and evident courſe we can take, we " will *follow the multitude.*"

When light ſprang up about 200 years ago, and God raiſed up ſome eminent perſons to declare his truth; the conſtant objection to the reformation they propoſed, was the opinion and practice of the multitude of the princes, the rulers, and the learned men of the world. This did not however diſcourage them in their work: but that was the popular pretence againſt them: and ſo it is to this day.

How many of the reformed religion uſe the ſame way of reaſoning as the Romiſh church have done before them? Thus thoſe of the Romiſh communion ſay, " we believe " as the church believes." They, upon the imagination that they have the greateſt numbers with them, except againſt the doctrine of the reformation, *&c.* And amongſt the reformed, if any confirm by ſcripture a truth not commonly received; too many, when they cannot anſwer the arguments advanc'd, have this ready at hand; " the greateſt part " of the reformation, the greateſt part of " proteſtants are on our ſide, we will go " with the multitude." And thus, thoſe who do not plead the general multitude of the whole world, they will plead the multitude in a leſſer number, party, or community.

But

But after all, is not this plain trifling, and an evident breach of this rule which God has given us, *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil?* If we cannot prove that what we practiſe is innocent, and that the doctrines we hold are founded upon the holy ſcripture, but continue to embrace errors; we ſhall never juſtify our conduct by ſaying, we have great numbers on our ſide, tho amongſt them there be men of great learning, and who have acquired authority by their wiſdom, by their power, and by their riches. All theſe will not do. *Fear not, little flock*, ſays Chriſt; *it is your Father's good pleaſure to give you the kingdom* [t]. Chriſt's flock is a little flock: while *wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to deſtruction, and many there be which go in thereat* [u]. And if we have no better argument for our principles, or profeſſion, than the numbers which are on our ſide; this is ſo far from being a good one, that it ſhould itſelf make us jealous that we are in the wrong.

What hath been advanced already, ſhews you how great need there was of this law; ſince there is hardly any prejudice which obtains more upon people's minds, and determines their thoughts, than the opinions and practices of the multitude. But yet I have not done with this head. For I deſign to

[t] Luke 12. 32. [u] Mat. 7. 13.

ſhew

ſhew you what are the cauſes of this prevailing prejudice upon the minds of men, that they are ſo often determined by the multitude to do evil, tho the law of God is ſo ſtrict againſt it. And in ſhewing the cauſes, thereby I ſhall ſhew you how great and dangerous an evil this is; and how unaccountable and unreaſonable. All which will ſerve to convince you what need there was of ſuch a precept; and that it ought to be conſtantly remembred by us, and often called to mind, leſt we ſhould be corrupted by the ſame prejudices.

SERMON II.

Preach'd at

PINNERS-HALL, December 9, 1704.

EXOD. xxiii. 2.

Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.—

The ſecond SERMON on this text.

IN a former diſcourſe I propoſed to explain the ſcope of this command of God: to conſider alſo the great neceſſity of ſuch a precept; and the juſtice and reaſonableneſs of it: and, laſtly, to make ſome improvement.

I. In the explication, I took notice of the form in which it is delivered. It is a negative precept, and ſtrikes directly at the vice it prohibits; points it out after ſo exact a manner, and with ſuch force, and emphaſis, that there can be no pretence or excuſe found to ſalve our conſciences, if we do not attend unto the voice of God in it. And tho

tho it contains in it the recommendation of the oppoſite virtue; yet in ſpeaking againſt this vice in this expreſs manner, it cuts off, as other negatives commonly do, many diſputes which men may form, and many pretences which they may raiſe in their minds to palliate the vices they commit. When we are required to *worſhip the Lord our God alone*, and to *hearken to the voice of his commands*; theſe general poſitive precepts contain in them what is expreſſed in this negative one: for, if we muſt hearken to God, if we muſt worſhip him, and obey his commandments; then it is a neceſſary inference, that we muſt *not follow a multitude to do evil.* But leſt men ſhould make diſtinctions to get themſelves off from ſuch general commands, God hath marked out ſuch and ſuch vices by many negative precepts, that there might be no colour of excuſe left.

I alſo obſerved to you, that it is ſpoken in the ſecond perſon to every individual man; leſt any ſhould pretend that they are under ſuch circumſtances that they muſt *follow a multitude to do evil.* Leſt any ſhould ſay, they have ſuch ſmall means of knowing, and their capacities are ſo ſmall and ſlender, that they muſt be governed by the minds of others; God ſpeaks to the conſcience of every man who hath the uſe of reaſon, *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.* No perſon is to excuſe himſelf therefore, as if he were

an exception, when the command is directed to every individual one.

I ſhewed you, that by *doing evil* is ſignified committing of ſin, whether it be in our own minds by expoſing ourſelves to deluſions, to vain imaginations and errors, not making that uſe of our underſtanding which we ought to do; or whether it be in the practice of our lives. We are neither in our actions or words, or in our thoughts, or opinions, to *follow the multitude to do evil.* We are not to entertain any falſe notions and doctrines; nor are we to act contrary to the divine commands in any reſpect, in complaiſance to any number of men whatſoever. As *ſin is the tranſgreſſion of* God's *law*, there is no number of men can excuſe our commiſſion of it: and therefore we muſt confine ourſelves to walk according to the divine will; and not according to the will of men, however numerous they may be.

Tho *the multitude* may ſignify a great number of men, whether the greateſt number in compariſon of any other, or a greater number in compariſon with a leſſer; we are neither to follow the evil cuſtoms of the whole world, nor the particular cuſtom or practice of any nation, any community of men, to do any thing which is evil, whatſoever numbers they may be in compariſon with thoſe who differ from them.

I obſerved to you by the way, that the word is rendred by ſome *the great*, or *the mighty*

mighty man. I know that may be contained in it indeed: and there is a great truth in this, that it is our duty even to differ from great men, men of quality and power, men who have abundance of authority, in civil matters; or who have acquired authority over the minds of many by their ſuppoſed wiſdom. We are not to *follow* any of theſe *to do evil.* But I eſpecially propoſed to conſider the words as they are tranſlated, with reference to *a multitude of people.* I have ſhewn you, that to follow theſe is to attend them, to ſerve them, to be complaiſant to them in imitating of them; to accompany them in their falſe notions, or in their evil practices. So that the ſum of the matter is this: God herein prohibits our conformity to a multitude of men, let the multitude be ever ſo great, in any thing that is contrary to his will, whether it be in doctrine or in practice. I proceeded after this explication to treat,

II. Of the great need of this precept. All God's precepts are uſeful; but ſome have an extraordinary extenſive influence. And it is remarkable that this precept is of very great importance, becauſe it ought to influence the whole of our practice, as well as of our thoughts: and it is of general extent, as it ſtrikes at an evil that is epidemical, which overſpreads the world. I propoſed to ſhew the neceſſity hereof,

1. By

1. By obſerving the extenſiveneſs of the vice which it prohibits; proving this in fact, by taking notice of what paſſes in the world at preſent, and what has been the cuſtom of all nations, of all ages, ever ſince the fall of man. But I propoſed farther under this head to inquire into the cauſes of the ſtrange extent of this evil: for tho by proving in fact that it is an extenſive vice, we ſhewed what need there was to give a precept againſt it; yet by ſhewing what the principles of this vice are, what are the motives which engage men to govern themſelves ſo, almoſt univerſally, we ſhall the more clearly ſee that there was abundance of need for God to give ſuch a precept to declare his mind againſt that vice very expreſly; which, as it is a common vice, ſo likewiſe proceeds from ſuch principles as are very common, and which it is very hard to hinder from having an influence upon our minds. I have ſhewn you the great need of this precept, in taking a general view of the ſtate of the world at preſent; where it is evident the generality of men are not governed by reaſon or by revelation, nor ſo much as conſult either of them in the great and important matters of religion, and in the regulation of their lives; or however if they do in ſome inſtances, yet they make not this the general rule of their conduct even in the moſt important matters. The generality content themſelves in this, that they *follow the multitude:* they follow a

great number; they do as others do, and therefore think they ſhall fare as well as others. This I have farther ſhewn, by looking back into times paſt: and in taking a view of the ſtate of the world ever ſince the fall, it is eaſy to obſerve, that the generality of men, in all ages, have been governed by this principle; and followed the multitude even in thoſe things which were breaches and tranſgreſſions of the law of God. I come now,

2. To ſpeak of the cauſes of this great miſchief; how it comes to paſs that men *follow a multitude to do evil*, and have generally ſo done. And,

(1.) One great cauſe of this is ſtupidity and ignorance: I ſay, the ſtupidity and ignorance of many is the great cauſe of this vice. For, as we have in part ſeen already, and may more fully when we come into the farther diſcuſſion of this matter, it is the moſt abſurd and unreaſonable thing in the world, and is a ſign of groſs ignorance and ſtupidity of mind. At leaſt in abundance, this muſt be allowed to be the cauſe of this great evil; that they do not ſo much as reaſon upon the matter; they do not make a reflection in their own minds, whether it is proper for them to be governed by the vogue, by the multitude, or not. One would think it ſhould be eaſy for them, if they would conſider, to ſee that nothing can be more unjuſt

unjuſt and unreaſonable than ſuch a perſuaſion: and therefore that there are ſo many who *follow a multitude to do evil*; that is, who tranſgreſs the law of God, becauſe they ſee others do it before them, muſt needs ariſe from ignorance and ſtupidity in abundance. They do not ſeem to act ſo maliciouſly as ſome others do againſt the law of God; but, without any examination of the matter, they think it is ſafe for them to do as others have done before them. They do not ſo much as inquire into the merit of the cauſe; they have been educated after ſuch a manner, and have been employed in things in the whole courſe of their lives which have ſo little reference to religion, that it would be a hard matter to put them upon thinking, if they are arrived to any conſiderable number of years. And therefore tho God hath given them faculties which might be improved; the unhappy circumſtances of their education, the manner of their lives, and the cuſtom of ſinning, the indulging their luſts, doth ſtrangely ſtupify their minds, and render them ignorant to a very great degree. Tho their ignorance and ſtupidity is not invincible, yet it is a difficult thing to overcome it when it is ſo circumſtanced. And I believe if it were poſſible to look perfectly into the ſpecial reaſons of this vice, the *following a multitude to do evil*; we ſhould find ignorance and ſtupidity have as great a ſhare in it as any thing elſe. For, is it poſſible

for thoſe, who are not very ignorant or very wicked, to ſatisfy themſelves *to follow a multitude* to do that which is contrary to the law of God? But thus hath it been in the idolatrous nations. It were an eaſy matter to have reaſoned with them, and ſhewn them that their idolatry was a moſt abſurd and fooliſh thing, as well as very wicked. But they were incapable of receiving the impreſſions of truth, becauſe they were educated in ſuch a way, and were ſtupid and ignorant, not uſed to reaſon and argue. And this is too much the caſe of a great number of thoſe who value themſelves upon their pretended chriſtianity, and yet never conſidered upon what grounds they took up their religion; but merely pride themſelves in being chriſtians, in bearing the name, becauſe their anceſtors did ſo; and becauſe they live among a people who profeſs the ſame thing, and it is accounted reproachful in ſuch a community not to be eſteemed chriſtians.

(2.) Another great reaſon hereof is lazineſs, and indifferency about the matters of religion. And this is too much the cauſe of this evil in them who have greater talents given them than thoſe I ſpoke of before. Some who have more pregnant apprehenſions, and are more capable of ſifting things, and of digeſting them in ſearching after truth, and perhaps have conſiderable time and leiſure to do it, yet do not apply themſelves to ſuch a reſearch; but merely out of a lazy temper

temper and diſpoſition of mind, and from an indifferency to the things of religion, let theſe things paſs on how they will, and take up with what is cuſtomary and common, without examining into matters, *what is the good and acceptable will of God.*

To ſearch after truth requires ſome induſtry and pains; eſpecially when it is conſidered how ſome have raiſed miſts to blind the eyes of the generality of mankind by their perverſe diſputes, and by their ſubtle diſtinctions; by the prepoſſeſſion wherewith they influence the minds of others. When we conſider theſe things, it will appear, I ſay, that it requires ſome pains and application of mind for perſons to ſearch after *the good and acceptable will of God* in his word, and to inquire into the reaſon of things as they ought to do: for theſe are the two great kinds and means of inſtruction. God hath given us reaſon and revelation, the light of nature and that of ſcripture: there muſt be a revolving things in our thoughts, turning them on every ſide ſo far as we are capable: there muſt be a *ſearching the ſcriptures*, as the noble Bereans did, *to ſee whether the things are ſo or not* [v]; whether they are as they are ſuggeſted to us or not. This requires ſome time, ſome pains, ſome thought: and men find it very difficult to apply themſelves ſtrictly to think of theſe matters, for

[v] Acts 17. 11.

want of the habit of thinking. And therefore thoſe who have employed their time almoſt thoughtleſly, who have only regarded their ſecular buſineſs, and have apprehended nothing more troubleſome, or impracticable, than to apply themſelves cloſely to trace the reaſon of things, and to compare one thing with another, that they might find the truth; they are diſcouraged upon this: and that they may indulge their idle and neglectful humour, chooſe rather to take up with the opinions of the multitude, tho they are likely to be in the wrong; and with their practices, however contrary to the divine law, than to ſearch and examine what is the pleaſure of God, how he will be ſerved and worſhiped, and what is the import of thoſe precepts of his which ought to govern our lives. How many have excellent intellectual talents given them by God, as appears by the improvements they have made in arts and ſciences, trade and buſineſs? yet theſe perſons, out of a lazy humour in things of religion, will not advert to them, will not conſider them, tho they may not only be capable of underſtanding the will of God, made known to us for the direction of our minds and conſciences, but might be ſerviceable to others, in explaining the truth to them. But religion is ſo little at the bottom of ſome mens minds, and there is ſo ſtrong a propenſion in them to employ themſelves in any thing rather than looking into

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the truth; and others are ſo diverted by the manner of their life, and by their evil habits, from thinking on any thing; that it is no wonder, when theſe things are conſidered, there are ſo few who apply themſelves to the means which God hath preſcribed: and therefore they muſt either be of no religion at all, or elſe take up with the multitude. If they ſhould not do this, it would be very ſtrange. It muſt be very ſtrange for thoſe who do not examine things themſelves, to follow the few, the leaſt number; for they are naturally led to conclude, that it is more prudent for them to take up their ſentiments from the greateſt number, becauſe they think it is moſt likely they ſhould be in the right.

(3.) Another reaſon of this is carnality of mind, the love of this world, and the things of it, and the fear of loſing the advantages of this preſent life. This is a principle very copious, and produces thoſe effects of which we are ſpeaking. For a man to give himſelf a great deal of trouble to ſeek after truth, and, if he finds it, to fight with a multitude, of which perhaps many have got poſſeſſion of a name for wiſdom, and have learned the way of ruling the minds and conſciences of others, and drawing multitudes after them; this is to practiſe great ſelf-denial. If perſons, I ſay, will ſearch after truth, they muſt oppoſe ſuch as theſe, and oppoſe the multitude: but this brings enemies, this brings reproach upon them;

this brings the loſs of reputation; and this expoſes them, many times, to very violent effects of the malice of great men, and ſometimes of the multitude. The way for a man to eſtabliſh himſelf, to ſecure and advance himſelf in the world, is *to follow the multitude*; to ſwim with the ſtream; to be complaiſant to all, or to the greateſt part of mankind; to ſuit his pretended notions to thoſe of others; to accommodate himſelf to the cuſtoms and practices which he finds have been eſtabliſhed by a long tract of time, and kept up by a great number of people. Theſe things do not ſhock a man's honour and reputation amongſt men, but tend to eſtabliſh his worldly intereſt. This puts him into the way of getting honour: for by how much the more we render ourſelves acceptable amongſt men, ſo much the more opportunity we have of raiſing ourſelves, and are able to make uſe of the greater numbers to ſerve us, than otherwiſe we could do. So that men find this ſo commodious for themſelves, that they forget the commands of God, and apply themſelves to the notions which are common, and in greateſt eſteem in the world; and to thoſe practices and cuſtoms which have gained reputation by a long preſcription, and by the vogue of the multitude.

Theſe things are evident in themſelves, to every one who will ſeriouſly conſider the matter. And could any thing elſe be expected,

pected, according to the courſe of human things? Hath it not been the experience of all ages, that thoſe people who would advance doctrines different from thoſe which are commonly received, tho they could prove them by reaſon and ſcripture againſt the multitude, have met with very ill uſage; and that they who have differed from the generality of mankind in their practice, eſpecially in relation to the worſhip of God, have met with the ſevereſt afflictions and perſecutions? And what, I ſay, could leſs be expected? Men like and love that which is like themſelves; and they hate that which is contrary. They muſt know how to govern their paſſions well, who can find others contradict their notions and principles upon which they value themſelves, and yet not be moved with ſome kind of indignation againſt them. When they ſee men ſet up practices which condemn theirs, and perhaps bring theirs under the notion of idolatry and ſuperſtition; this raiſes in their minds ſtrange paſſions. In conſequence whereof, they who do ſo, muſt expect to meet with oppoſition in the world; and muſt therefore forego their worldly advantages, if they will not *follow the multitude to do evil.*

Thoſe indeed who ſearch after the will of God after the manner that he hath preſcribed, in all appearance are the moſt likely to find it: and if they find the truth, it is certain they have better arguments to defend

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it than their adverſaries have to defend errors. But nothing is more common, than for thoſe who have not arguments ſufficient to ſupport what they maintain, to act as if they could ſupply that defect with their inordinate paſſions. They violently go about to reſiſt and to perſecute thoſe who differ from them. So that if a man conſults himſelf upon the principles of fleſh and blood; if he have no farther view than to ſecure and promote his temporal intereſt, and to avoid the inconveniences of the troubles of this world; he muſt accommodate himſelf to the multitude. And this is one great reaſon why ſo many *follow the multitude to do evil.* It is becauſe they would avoid the reproaches and perſecutions of men, and be in the fairer way to get friends and reputation in the world; and furniſh themſelves with ſuch ſenſual pleaſures as may gratify their carnal appetites. Senſuality is the principal thing which governs their ſouls: they have a greater guſt for temporal things than they have for any ſpiritual advantages.

Now upon the whole: if we conſider how many are ſtupid and ignorant to a great degree; how many are lazy and negligent, and indifferent about the matters of religion; and how many in the world ſeek to ſecure themſelves, to eſtabliſh themſelves and their families, and get wealth and reputation amongſt men, who *ſeek honour from men, rather*

ther than the honour that comes from God [w]; if these are the principles which govern the generality of men; then certainly, seeing these principles tend to make them *follow the multitude to do evil*, it was very needful God should give such a precept as this is. And therein we may see his wisdom and his goodness, as well as his holiness and justice. For there are no principles in the world more common than those I have spoken of; and none more proper, it seems, to indulge men in this vice, which is so contrary to the divine command we have been explaining. There was therefore great reason and need of such a command as this is. And by how much the more necessary it is, so much the more attention we should give to it; lest we be *led away with the error of the wicked* [x], and fall into the same prejudices with others, and at last into the same condemnation. I proceed now,

III. To shew you the justice and reasonableness of this command. And that will appear by the injustice and unreasonableness of the vice which it condemns, as well as the unreasonableness of that vice will appear by the reasonableness of this command.

It were endless to enumerate the considerations which would prove this matter. It may be made to appear just and reasonable from

[w] John 5. 44. | [x] 2 Pet. 3. 17.

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the plain aſſertions of the holy ſcriptures: which is a ſufficient argument amongſt thoſe who hold the ſcriptures to be the word of God: *i. e.* amongſt chriſtians; for we can ſee no farther than God has revealed. And yet even among theſe we ſhall find many who *follow the multitude to do evil*; tho it is expreſly forbidden in this text, and tho there are many other texts to the ſame purpoſe. What are all thoſe remonſtrances of the prophets, wherein they blame the people for following the cuſtoms of the heathen, their neighbours, round about them? What is the reaſon of ſo many prohibitions to hinder the people from *following the multitude to do evil?* All the commendations they give to thoſe who made it their practice to ſeparate from the multitude, and to be governed by the divine word; theſe were declarations to the ſame purpoſe, that the multitude is not to be followed in any thing that is evil. All the revelations of God's righteous judgments in puniſhing even his own people when they were guilty of this ſin, are ſo many declarations how contrary that vicious practice is to his rule. All that is ſaid by our Saviour, and by his apoſtles, when they vindicate themſelves againſt the popular prejudices of their differing from others, and from great men; all they ſay in defenſe of themſelves, is a confirmation of this thing. When our Saviour commands us to *take up our croſs, and deny ourſelves, and follow*

follow him, if we would be his disciples [y]; this shews we must oppose the current of the world. When the apostles are censured before princes for preaching of Jesus, they say; *Whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye* [z]. This principle, this maxim, is to the same purpose with our text. For, if we must *obey God rather than men* [a]; then we must not disobey God in complaisance to any great men, or to ever so great a multitude of men. All the declarations which Christ makes, and the notice he takes of the smallness of the number of those who fear God, in comparison of others; all this is a proof that the greatest numbers are in the wrong. *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom* [b]. The church of Christ is but a *little flock*, in comparison to the opposite multitude. If therefore we would follow the church of Christ; if we would be safe in regard of the fundamental principles of religion; we must not judge according to the greatest number of mankind. And we must not judge of truth in all the instances of its discovery, even where there is the church of Christ; because no church of Christ is infallible. *To the law, and to the testimony: if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them* [c]. God hath left us his word for a

[y] Mark 8. 34.
[z] Acts 4. 19.
[a] *Chap.* 5. 29.
[b] Luke 12. 32.
[c] Isa. 8. 20.

rule:

rule: and no number of men are to determine what is truth, and what is error; but the word of God only is to give us a determination in that matter.

All the bright examples we have in ſcripture of a practice conformable to the precept in our text, the many inſtances of thoſe who would not *follow a multitude to do evil*, prove to us how reaſonable and juſt it is; ſeeing thoſe to whom God himſelf has given the moſt commendable characters, ſubmitted to this rule, and oppoſed the vice which it condemns, in that they would not *follow the multitude to do evil. Enoch walked with God*[d], tho he ſeems to have walked almoſt alone in the old world. But he was ſoon taken to a place where there was no ſuch ſolitude; *to an innumerable company of angels*, to whoſe company his life was ſo conformable. *The wickedneſs of men was great*; *and all fleſh had corrupted his way*[e]. What a character therefore had Noah given him, that he bore a teſtimony againſt the corrupt notions and practices of the old world; and was *a preacher of righteouſneſs* in ſuch a time of wickedneſs? And what an eminent reward did God give him in ſaving him and his family, when he ſwept away all mankind? Are not theſe declarations how God approves of thoſe who will not *follow the multitude to do evil?* Abram was a generous example of the like

[d] Gen. 5. 24. | [e] *Chap.* 6. 12.

kind:

kind: he *forſook his country, and his kindred, and his father's houſe* [f]; and was ſo far from *following the multitude to do evil,* that he would forſake all the advantages of the family to which he belonged; and did actually forſake all to follow God, tho he *knew not whither he went* [g], rather than he would follow the corrupt practices of the place where he lived. When the prophet complains that he was *left alone* [h], he himſelf knew that he was not to *follow the multitude to do evil,* if he had been alone: tho indeed God had *ſeven thouſand men reſerved* at that time, *who would not bow their knee to Baal* [i]. When the prophet did not know there was ſuch a number of men left, he knew it was his duty to be alone rather than to *follow the multitude to do evil*; and that ſeven thouſand was but a ſmall number in compariſon of the much greater number of idolaters in that nation.

It were eaſy to enumerate inſtances: particularly the obedience of the three children, Shadrac, Meſhech, and Abednego; who would hearken rather to the voice of God's holy law than to Nebuchadnezzar; and would diſtinguiſh themſelves, when the people of ſo many nations and kingdoms, as one man, threw themſelves at the feet of the idol. Theſe would ſubmit to the fury of the fiery furnace, rather than do that great evil.

[f] Gen. 12. 1.
[g] Heb. 11. 8.
[h] 1 Kings 19. 14.
[i] *Ver.* 18.

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The like may be ſaid of the apoſtles and primitive chriſtians, and of the martyrs in ſucceeding ages; who are ſo many inſtances of obedience to God in conformity to this precept. And certainly ſuch *a cloud of witneſſes*, who are recorded in the word of God with ſo much honour and applauſe, are intended as ſo many motives to us, that we ſhould follow their example. Here is therefore a teſtimony, from God himſelf, how much he approves our acting againſt the ſtream of evil cuſtoms and practices.

But, beſides this, there are many proofs which may be brought from the reaſon and nature of the thing itſelf. It is no difficult matter to ſhew you the great abſurdity of *following the multitude to do evil*; the great uncertainty there is in taking ſuch a meaſure; the little ſecurity that men can boaſt themſelves to have, when they take this courſe, and ſatisfy themſelves upon ſuch ſlender grounds that they are ſafe. But theſe things would lead me to too great a length at preſent: and therefore I ſhall conclude in making a reflection or two; and refer the arguing the matter, and ſhewing the abſurdity of it, to another ſeaſon.

1. If it be ſo needful that ſuch a precept as this ſhould be given, as appears by the general corruption of the minds and manners of men, and the courſe of their lives, and their diſpoſitions and inclinations: then this

ſhews God's great wiſdom, as well as his goodneſs, in diſcovering to us the great perfection of his holy law: that this precept, of which we have ſo great need, ſhould be not only given in terms ſo expreſs, but in other texts which ſpeak to the ſame purpoſe; and wherein there are words of the like import. And not only ſo: but the ſame divine wiſdom and goodneſs are diſcovered to us by the manifold judgments of God which have been diſplayed againſt thoſe who have *followed a multitude to do evil*; and the great applauſe and honour which he has beſtowed on thoſe, in his word, who have followed him, in oppoſition to the multitude; to men famous for wiſdom and power, who have oppoſed their practice, and ſometimes have perſecuted them to death upon that account. As the precept is good in itſelf, ſo it is inculcated on our minds after an excellent manner. The word of God furniſhes us with the ſtrongeſt reaſons, and the moſt favourable motives, to engage us to follow the example of thoſe excellent perſons who would *obey God rather than men* [k]; who would conform themſelves to his will, rather than to the humours of men; who would do as God commanded them, tho they were alone, rather than *follow a multitude to do evil.*

2. Here we may ſee, with ſhame and diſgrace, the violent degeneracy of human

[k] Acts 5. 29.

nature: that notwithſtanding the plainneſs of the divine precepts, and, I may add, the reaſonableneſs of them, which we ſhall have a farther occaſion to prove; yet the generality of men act contrary to the divine will in this inſtance. Who is willing to *receive the truth in the love of it* [l]? Who are they that chooſe the honour of God rather than that of men; and are willing to be as it were alone, rather than be without the company of the truth? who will ſacrifice the applauſes of the multitude to the will of God, and his approbation? The happy few ſhall indeed be owned of God, who will ſay to them, *Well done, good and faithful ſervants* [m]. But how many will rather expoſe themſelves to the judgments of heaven, that they may hear the flattering ſhout of the multitude; as Herod did? *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man* [n]. How fooliſh and ridiculous, many times, are the cenſures of the multitude; and how vain and unworthy their applauſe? And what a fooliſh and unreaſonable thing then is it for men to buy their good opinion at ſo dear a rate as the expoſing themſelves to the ſevere cenſures of the Almighty himſelf? What an amazing folly, to fear the reproaches of an unthinking multitude, who have no right to determine our religious opinions and practices, rather than to fear that wiſe and righteous God to whom

[l] 2 Theſſ. 2. 10.
[m] Mat. 25. 21.
[n] Acts 12. 22.

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we are accountable for all our notions, and all our actions; and who is not only able to vindicate his own honour, but has ſufficiently declared he will ſeverely puniſh thoſe who contemn his authority? How much is it to be lamented that ſuch baſe principles as ignorance and ſtupidity, lazineſs, thoughtleſs indifferency and careleſneſs in matters of religion, ſenſuality and carnality of mind; that ſuch baſe principles as theſe ſhould ſo govern men, as to make them perſuade themſelves that they are very ſafe, and that they act well, becauſe they act conformably to the multitude; as if their principles and practices muſt of courſe be good in themſelves, and would certainly produce good effects, becauſe they have a great number on their ſide? The ſin is the more to be abhorred, and, with the greater ſtrictneſs, to be avoided. It is ſo far from being a reaſon to do any thing which is evil, that it is a reaſon againſt it. If the multitude do evil, then the more reaſon have we to act contrary to them. And, if there are hardly any to ſpeak for God's truth and honour; it becomes thoſe who love him in ſincerity and truth, to think themſelves obliged to ſpeak, when there is almoſt an univerſal ſilence: when there are many who ſpeak againſt the truth contained in the divine word, it is then certainly the time for us to contend for it.

To conclude: let us endeavour ſeriouſly to examine ourſelves, whether ſuch principles as theſe have govern'd us, and to what degree: whether we have not taken up ſome opinions without conſidering whether they are true or not, becauſe they were embraced by ſome who went before us; or done ſome things without conſidering whether they were lawful or not, becauſe others did the ſame. If we have not followed this precept in theſe inſtances, we ought to be humbled that we have had no more regard to this divine and expreſs command, and to others, of the like import, contained in the word of God. We ought to be humbled wherein we have prevaricated; and wherein we have acted unbecoming ourſelves, and unſuitable to the divine requirements. And we ought to make this the ſtrict rule of our conduct for time to come; that we will not follow the giddy multitude, and take things from them, but from God; that we will conſider the notions we have received, and compare them with the ſcriptures, and conform the ſentiments of our minds to them, according only as they agree with that ſacred ſtandard; and that we will conſider our practices, and maintain or reject them, as they ſtand approved or condemned by the word of God. If we thus ſeek the truth, no doubt but we ſhall find it. We ſhall have occaſion to bleſs God that he opens our eyes, and gives us light into the knowledge of his will,

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when once we ſeek him after ſuch a manner as this. But the main reaſon why ſo many ſeem to ſeek and do not find, is becauſe before they have made ſuch a reſearch as they ought to do, they are willing to ſhut their eyes, and divert their thoughts from the conſideration of the reaſon of the things, and to determine themſelves according to the cuſtoms of the times and people amongſt whom they live, rather than conform themſelves purely and intirely to the word of God. We ſhould labour hard therefore to diveſt our minds of all kind of prejudices, that ſo we may devote ourſelves to that God who hath given us reaſon and revelation to guide and conduct us; that we may not entertain an *error in our right hand* [o], or *hide any iniquity as a ſweet morſel under our tongue* [p]; but conform ourſelves to that *doctrine which is according to godlineſs* [q]; and our lives to that practice which is agreeable to the ſcriptures of truth.

[o] Iſa. 44. 20.
[p] Job. 20. 12.
[q] 1 Tim. 6. 3.

SERMON III.

Preach'd at

PINNERS-HALL, December 16, 1704.

EXOD. xxiii. 2.

Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.—

The third SERMON on this text.

YOU may remember that I propoſed,

I. To explain theſe words.

II. To ſhew the neceſſity of this precept.

III. To ſpeak of the juſtice and reaſonableneſs of it, by ſhewing the injuſtice and unreaſonableneſs of that vice it prohibits.

The text hath been explained. And I have ſhewn you, that to *do evil*, ſignifies to commit ſin: and comprehends every thing that may be called a tranſgreſſion of the divine law, whether in our thoughts, words, or actions; whether by committing what is abſo-

abſolutely evil, or omitting what is good, or our duty to do; whether it be by entertaining errors, contrary to *the form of ſound words*[r], or by the practice of ſins prohibited by the divine laws. We are to abſtain from all theſe evils; nay, from the very *appearance of evil*[s]. And we are to uſe no excuſe, however plauſible, to palliate and extenuate our crimes. We are not to think it ſufficient that there is the pattern and example of others, tho ever ſo great in number or dignity. For, we are not to *follow the multitude to do evil.* We are not to follow the great numbers of men; or thoſe who are great in quality, as ſome interpret the words. We are not to attend them, to wait upon them, to imitate them, to obey them, to accompany them in any thing which is contrary to the divine will. This is the ſubſtance of what the precept prohibits; our committing of ſin, in complaiſance to any numbers of men whatſoever.

I have alſo inſiſted upon the great need there is of ſuch a precept as this. Indeed the reaſon of the thing ſhews that men ought to collect the ſubſtance of this precept, from many others, if it had not been expreſſed: but that God, who knows the hearts of men, and knew how they would be prone to this kind of vice, hath been pleaſed to give an expreſs and particular command againſt it.

[r] 2 Tim. i. 13. | [s] 1 Theſſ. v. 22.

I have ſhewn you the need of this, by taking a view of the preſent ſtate of the world: and, upon examination, we have found that nothing is more common than this, to *follow the multitude to do evil.* We have looked back upon times paſt, and taken a general view of the world in its former ſtate: and we find what Solomon ſays to be true in this caſe, as well as in others; *There is no new thing under the ſun* [s]. The ſame prejudices have prevailed in times paſt as well as now: it has been too much the practice of all ages to take the eaſieſt and readieſt way, and to *follow the multitude to do evil.*

We have ſhewn you the need of this precept moreover, by inquiring into the principles of this great miſchief it oppoſes. 1. Ignorance and ſtupidity. 2. Lazineſs, and indifferency about duty, and things of the greateſt conſequence. And, 3. A worldly frame of ſpirit, whereby men have ſought the pleaſures, the honours, the riches, the friends of this world, and ſacrificed all to them.

Some are very ſtupid and ignorant: and many times it is an ignorance which they have brought upon themſelves, and what we call a wilful or an affected ignorance. So great is the ignorance and ſtupidity of men; partly from this wilfulneſs, and partly from the circumſtances of their lives, and the manner of

[s] Eccleſ. 1. 9.

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their education, and the affairs of the world in which they are engaged; that in many inſtances they hardly caſt about, or think what is truth, or what is error, what is good, and what is bad; but conclude they are ſafe in *following the multitude.*

Others, again, have greater parts, and more time; and God hath given them many advantages for the inveſtigation of truth, if they would improve them: but thro' lazineſs, and ſoftneſs of temper; thro' a criminal indifferency about this matter, which tho it would indeed take up their thoughts and their time, yet it would entertain them moſt agreeably and profitably; they abandon the diſquiſition of truth and religion to others, and take the common road of *following the multitude*, tho they go blindfold after them: and commonly this iſſues in deſtruction.

Another principle is carnality of mind. Men are ſo debauched and corrupted in their minds by the things of this world, by places of honour and dignity, by carnal pleaſures, and the riches of this world, that they think it would be a very great piece of ſelf-denial to abandon the multitude; and conſequently conclude it is beſt for them to chooſe blindfold that which they know not whether it be good or evil; or ſometimes to chooſe that which they know is evil, becauſe they would comply with others, and be complaiſant to thoſe on whom they imagine their temporal

proſperity

proſperity to depend. This is indeed a ſordid and very unbecoming temper: but there is nothing more common in the world. Was there ever any religion ſet up in any nation, but the generality would follow it? Was there any change of religion for the better, or worſe, but the generality would purſue it; externally at leaſt? Which ſhews that men do not govern themſelves by right, and wrong; by conſidering what is right, and what is wrong; by conſidering what is truth, and what is error; that they may chooſe the one, and refuſe the other: but by obſerving what other people do; by conſidering how they may beſt eſtabliſh their reputation here, and procure the greateſt numbers of friends, advance themſelves to poſts of honour in the world, and gratify their ſenſual inclinations with all the pleaſures of this life.

Now ſeeing theſe are the principles of action which influence the generality of mankind, and theſe are the worſt that can be; (for what can be worſe than ſtupidity, lazineſs, and carnality of mind) you ſee what great neceſſity there was that God ſhould give ſuch a law as this; what great need the world had of it. Tho indeed it is to be greatly lamented that it is ſo little regarded; yet what inſtitution could be more extenſively neceſſary and uſeful than ſuch an one as this, which is to reſtrain an epidemical diſeaſe, and to engage men to conſider themſelves and their duty; to avoid a practice which

which hath obtained upon the generality of their fellow-creatures, a practice of ſuch dangerous tendency. I now proceed,

III. To ſpeak of the juſtice and reaſonableneſs of this law, by ſhewing the unreaſonableneſs of the evil it prohibits; by ſhewing you what a very ill thing it is, and how very unreaſonable, for perſons to *follow the multitude to do evil.* I know not whether I need, by the way, obviate what it is poſſible ſome may object; that ſuch a diſcourſe tends to make the few the patterns we ought to follow, inſtead of a multitude. But I anſwer; that thoſe who attend to what hath been already ſaid, and may conſider what will be farther advanced on this ſubject, will find that our deſign is not to make either the multitude, or the few, the ſtandard of our practice. We are *to follow* none *to do evil*; either the few, or the multitude: and therefore we do not pretend to ſhew that in every caſe, where there are but a few of an opinion, that opinion muſt needs be right; or that thoſe things which are practiſed only by a few, muſt needs be right, becauſe but a few practiſe them. There may be ſome inſtances wherein the multitude may be in the right, and the few in the wrong: and therefore we muſt not take that for a teſt. The word of God is the rule whereby we are to conduct ourſelves; and not men of low or high degree, of leſſer or of greater numbers.

bers. Tho it is certain that the truth is more commonly found amongſt a few than the great many; yet this is to be no rule for us to go by. We are to conſider things abſtractly from the practice of men, and to reduce all to the divine word: *To the law, and to the teſtimony* [t].

But now I apply myſelf to ſpeak of the unreaſonableneſs and injuſtice of this proceeding, *to follow a multitude to do evil*; and thereby to vindicate the juſtice of this law which forbids it. And,

1. The unreaſonableneſs of this will appear, if we conſider the nature of the things themſelves; that truth and error, good and evil, are not dependent upon the humours of men. Truth is an independent thing; and ſo likewiſe goodneſs: theſe do not depend upon the will of man. And, as the apoſtles ſaid of themſelves, *Paul an apoſtle, not of man, or of the will of man, but of God* [u]; ſo I may ſay concerning truth and righteouſneſs, they are *not of the will of man, but of God:* and therefore the nature of them can never be altered. It is a moſt unreaſonable thing to call things directly contrary to what they are: to *call darkneſs light, and light darkneſs*; *that which is bitter, to call it ſweet, and that which is ſweet, bitter*; *to put good for evil, and evil for good* [v]. Of this, God hath declared his abhorrence.

[t] Iſa. 8. 20.
[u] Gal. 1. 1. 2 Cor. 1. 1.
[v] Iſa. 5. 20.

And

And if it be unreaſonable for men to call a thing by a name which is directly contrary to its nature, and act towards it as if it were quite another thing than what it is; then it is ſo much the more abſurd, by how much the more important the things are we inquire about. It is a fooliſh and abſurd thing for a man to ſay the ſun does not ſhine in the middle of the day: yet this is not an error of great importance, becauſe it would not do others or himſelf ſuch abundance of hurt. But if men entertain errors which are deſtructive of their ſouls, the conſequence of the errors renders them exceeding fatal: and, if they reject truths which are of the higheſt conſequence to the ſalvation of their ſouls; the importance of the truths makes their errors ſo very dangerous.

And the ſame may be ſaid of good and evil. If a man would ſtupify himſelf, as the Stoicks pretended to do, and call pain a good thing, or deny it to be an evil, in ſpite of the teſtimonies of his ſenſes; one might laugh at his folly, or pity the diſtemper'd humour of a perſon who would ſpeak thus againſt common ſenſe. But what great hurt would this do, if a man could imagine his pain to be lighter than others, and were pleaſed to call it by the wrong name of pleaſure? But when men ſhall act towards God, and the affairs of another world after ſuch a manner as to deprive themſelves of everlaſting happineſs thro' their folly, and involve themſelves

ſelves in eternal miſchief and ruin; this is to be lamented, becauſe of the fatal conſequences which attend it.

It is therefore a great abſurdity that men put truth for error, and error for truth, good for evil, and evil for good, becauſe they find other people do ſo; when it is certain that theſe things are of ſuch an invariable nature that they cannot be changed. This thing is not good, either the more or leſs, becauſe the multitude think it ſo, or do not think it ſo: and another thing is not the leſs truth, becauſe the multitude think it ſo, or think the contrary. Seeing therefore the things about which we are concerned are of ſuch a nature that they do not depend upon the humours or fancies of men, but they are invariably the ſame; ſince that which is in its own nature true, and juſt and good, is ſo, and will be ſo, let all the world ſpeak the contrary of it; ſince that which is falſe, and vicious and vile, will be ſo, if there be the voice of all mankind to the contrary; ſince the nature of the things themſelves cannot be altered by great numbers, and they cannot give authority to any thing which ought not to be: hence it appears to be an abſurd thing *to follow the multitude to do evil*; becauſe they cannot alter the nature of it in the leaſt.

2. The abſurdity hereof is demonſtrated, if we conſider it with reference to God; how high a contempt of his authority it is, and

and how much it reflects upon his dignity and sovereignty. For it is, in effect, for men to set up their fellow-creatures in opposition to the divine majesty. God hath declared what is true, and what is good; what he would have us to believe and practise. Now to transgress his laws; this is evil, this is sin: and *following the multitude* will not make amends for such a crime as this is. The question is, *Whether we should obey God or men* [w]? If men: we set them in the place of God, and declare that we love God less than our fellow-creatures, or regard our own temporal advantages more than his law; that we prefer a poor ignorant creature, who is but of yesterday, or a great many ignorant ones, who *are but of yesterday, and know nothing* [x], to him who *is from everlasting* [y], *and is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever* [z]. We prefer their dictates to his precepts, who *is truth itself*; who *is infinitely wise, and knoweth all things.* We prefer them who may deceive us, and may be deceived themselves; and who are many times so vile, that they will deceive maliciously, as well as ignorantly: we prefer these, I say, before God, who cannot be deceived, because he is infinitely knowing and wise; and cannot deceive others, because he is infinitely good and just.

[w] Acts 4. 19.
[x] Job 8. 9.
[y] Psal. 90. 2.
[z] Heb. 13. 8.

Can any thing be a greater affront to the majesty of God, than that persons should pretend to excuse themselves to his face for breaking his laws, because others of his creatures have done it? If multitudes have rebell'd against him, and broken his holy commandments, there is certainly the more reason we should keep them. Can any one think this is a good rule, that when the Almighty hath told us what we should do, we take the quite contrary course, because the greatest number of our fellow-creatures have acted after such a manner? No, certainly! right reason will teach us to argue quite otherwise. *They have corrupted their way upon earth*; therefore should we reform. They have abandoned themselves to innumerable evils; therefore we should set examples becoming rational creatures, and those who profess to worship the true God; should *search after the truth, receive it in the love of it*, and endeavour to engage others in the same inquiry, and in the same becoming practice.

3. As it is an high affront unto the majesty of God to *follow the multitude to do evil*, because it is to pay that homage and respect to them which is owing to God himself, and to none but him; so likewise it is doing violence and injustice to our own reason, and our own consciences. And methinks an argument which comes so near our own souls, or our reason and conscience, should a little affect

affect us. If other people ſpeak againſt our reaſon, againſt our underſtanding; how prone are we to be affronted? Many can rather ſuffer the imputation of diſhoneſty, than to be eſteemed weak in their intellects. To be accounted a fool, is an intolerable imputation to the generality of men. So tender are we of this part of our character, that if there be never ſo great a deficiency in our underſtandings, yet we affect to be accounted wiſe. This is the general deſire of mankind: and certainly then, if other people affront us, as we are rational creatures, when they do not aſcribe to us ſuch a meaſure of good ſenſe and reaſon as we think we deſerve; if, I ſay, we are ſo much concerned about this, it is very ſtrange that we ſhould be ſo eaſily engaged to affront our reaſon after a more intolerable manner, as we do in this inſtance, when we *follow the multitude to do evil.*

Conſider what a wiſe choice a man makes when he *follows the multitude to do evil!* He chooſes *darkneſs rather than light*, and *evil before good:* and, with reſpect to the perſons to whom he commits the conduct of himſelf, he makes a very miſerable choice indeed; as you have heard, in ſome degree, already. A miſerable choice! to take himſelf from under the conduct of God, and put himſelf under the conduct of men. Sinful, ignorant, miſtaken men! he chooſes to guide him, inſtead of that God who is poſſeſſed of

all perfections; who is infinitely knowing, wiſe, holy, juſt, and good.

But let us conſider the thing in itſelf, the chooſing the multitude to walk by. Conſider it naturally; and you'll ſee what an imprudent choice a man makes who walks by this rule. This multitude is made up of individuals: be it ever ſo numerous, it ſtill conſiſts of a great number of ſingle perſons collected together. Now if we are to be determined by the whole multitude; if there be any reaſon in ſuch a choice, it muſt be becauſe we ſuppoſe, on the account of their numbers, they are likely to be more in the right at leaſt, and ſo it is ſafeſt to follow them. But examine this multitude, and conſider each particular perſon: it may be you who are willing to follow this multitude out of lazineſs, or ſome other cauſe as bad or worſe, cannot find perſons, one of a hundred amongſt them, who knows any more of the matter than yourſelf. And can theſe be fit to direct you? Is it ſafe to be guided thus by the ignorant, who know no more than yourſelves, or perhaps a great deal leſs? Will any man leave his trade or buſineſs to the conduct of thoſe who were never acquainted with it in their lives, becauſe he hath got a conſiderable number of unexpert men who know nothing of the matter? Is he like to thrive, becauſe he follows the direction of a great number of thoſe who have never had any

any experience or knowledge in his affairs, and ſo know not how to give him advice?

And farther, conſider, that as this is the general vogue of the world, *to follow the multitude*; ſo do individuals generally take the ſame method. There is not one in a great number who takes up his principles and practices from reaſon and ſcripture; but merely becauſe others have judged ſo before him. Their anceſtors, thoſe who have lived before them, have gone in the ſame road: and they take things upon truſt, juſt as they find them, according to the vogue of tradition. What is the ſenſe then of *following the multitude to do evil?* Why, it is for *the blind to lead the blind* [a]; which is a folly, to a proverb. When the way we are to go is difficult, and a miſtake ſo hazardous; when the intereſt of our ſouls depends on taking rhe right path, and eternal happineſs or miſery are the two extremes, in one of which our journey muſt certainly terminate; 'tis ſtrange ſtupidity to put ourſelves under the conduct of blind men: and this becauſe there is a multitude of them. Are ſuch fit to direct others, who are not capable of ſeeing their own way? When the individuals of which the multitude is compos'd are examined, thoſe who are conſiderate will be found to be but few, and the far greater part to know nothing at all. Therefore that which makes up the

[a] Mat. 15. 14.

great number, can, to a wiſe and thinking man, give no weight at all to the argument, to the principle or practice, of which the inquiry is made. For, wherever there is a nation of people, or a great multitude, who entertain ſome certain principle or practice; you may take it for granted, for it will always be found upon examination to be true, that the greateſt part are ignorant. And therefore it is the leſſer number, even of that multitude, who are the moſt likely to be in the right. Thoſe who have never thought, never judged, never weighed, or tried a matter; as they have not a capacity, ſo how ſhould they have a right and authority, to inſtruct and manage the minds of others? If we were to be governed by human authority, the multitude is certainly the moſt unfit in the world; for the greateſt part never thought ſeriouſly and ſtrictly, ſo as to come at any reaſonable knowledge of things. You ſee therefore what an abſurd and ridiculous thing it is *to follow the multitude*; eſpecially to follow the multitude in oppoſition to the commands of God. It is a fooliſh thing *to follow the multitude* in any thing which is detrimental to us. But in matters of conſcience, and religion, either in principle or practice, to give up ourſelves to the conduct of the multitude; you ſee how abſurd that is, when the greateſt part know not how to guide themſelves.

4. As

4. As we have conſidered the greateſt part of the multitude, and found them to be ignorant; let us take a view of the leſſer part of this multitude, the more thinking and learned part of them. Theſe are men, perhaps, of good natural capacities; men of learning, and good education, men of authority, *&c.* But yet how can we be ſafe even under the conduct of theſe, if we have no other rule? for the generality of the *wiſe* and *learned*, and *noble* in this world, as they oppoſed our Lord Jeſus Chriſt when he was here on earth, ſo how do we know that they do not oppoſe him ſtill? It is very plain that this part of the multitude, the dignified amongſt them, very often preſcribe things contrary to the word of God. Theſe men therefore are not to be followed: they are biaſſed as well as others: they court the multitude, as the multitude follows them. They are on the ſide of the multitude, becauſe perhaps they find their account in it: and therefore tho their heads are better furniſhed than others, yet their hearts are no better than the reſt. As they pay their homage to the multitude; ſo they know the multitude will, in return, pay theirs to them. *To follow the multitude* is the way to get preferment. How often therefore are evil practices introduced by thoſe who know better, only in complaiſance to the multitude? What an abſurdity then is it *to follow the multitude*, if the greateſt part of them be ignorant; and the leſſer part of

them, the men of dignity, authority, and learning, are ſo liable to be biaſſed, and corrupted; and, to ſerve their ſecular intereſts, to be led the wrong way? Not that all do ſo: but this is moſt frequently and commonly the caſe. And this ſhews us, that it is the greateſt folly in the world, and the moſt unſafe thing that can be, *to follow the multitude.* And therefore we ſhould cleave to the word of God, and examine all things by that.

Nay, I might puſh the matter farther. Where there are a great many good men; to follow them implicitly, would be an unreaſonable way of proceeding. For, good men are not always wiſe: good men may be miſtaken; and they often are ſo. There is no good man will pretend to infallibity. There is no ſuch thing. For, as *men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lye* [b]; ſo good men themſelves have been deceived, and have deceived others. Some, who have made a great and a ſpecious appearance of being good men, have been but hypocrites at the bottom. Others, who are really good men, may be deceived themſelves, and ſo may deceive others. And we ſometimes ſee that even good men can hardly ſo diveſt their minds of honour and reputation amongſt men, but they will love to have a little authority over other people; and therefore

[b] Pſal. 62. 9.

do

do not care to explain things ſo clearly and fully to them as they ſhould, but would have them take things, in ſome meaſure, upon their word. There is too much of this even amongſt thoſe who are really good. All which ſhews it is unſafe to truſt the multitude, or the better part of the multitude. We ſhould be at a ſtrange loſs about this matter, if we had not the rule of God's word to go by. You ſee, I ſay, how abſurd a thing it is *to follow the multitude:* for if you take this multitude to pieces, there is no ground at all to go upon. The greateſt part are ignorant, and know nothing; and the other part may lead us aſtray: the firſt ſort have no *eyes, and cannot ſee*; and the other may be miſtaken themſelves, and will be very likely to deceive us. So that conſequently it is doing a violence to our own reaſon, *to follow the multitude to do evil*; to make them our rule.

5. This will farther appear, if you conſider that by the ſame way of reaſoning we ſhall never know where to reſt. For if we *follow the multitude to do evil*, and this be a rule, that a man muſt follow a multitude; where will this multitude be fixed? It will reach all other nations and countries; and then the multitude in one country, will be excluded by a greater number in another: and ſo all the leſſer nations muſt conform to the greater, till there be an uniformity in the whole. A project which it is abſolutely impoſſible to

effect: for if this be the rule, then the generality of men, their principles and practices, are to be accounted the ſtandard of the conſciences of all the reſt; which can never be known till we know the ſentiments of all the men in the world, as well as thoſe of our own nation.

6. The abſurdity of this farther appears, becauſe this would be to make the multitude which was one time a rule in the world, not to be ſo another time; and here would be confuſion another way. For inſtance, in this nation. The multitude of our fore-fathers, before chriſtianity, were Pagans: if it was fit *to follow that multitude*; then it was not fit to entertain chriſtianity. The multitude of our fore-fathers two or three hundred years ago, were of the Romiſh communion, entertained their corrupt notions, and practiſed their idolatries: if it were fit *to follow the multitude to do evil*; then there ought never to have been a reformation. And the ſame may be ſaid concerning other nations. Here would therefore be a perplexing difficulty. If this were the maxim, *to follow the multitude*; the queſtion would be, what multitude? If of the ſame nation: the multitude of this age, in this nation, are for proteſtantiſm; a few ages before, for popery; and, before popery, for paganiſm. If it be ſaid, they are in the right whom we find in poſſeſſion; then, it ſeems, all theſe were right in their turns. So that

if

if we had lived in the times of paganiſm, or popery, we had had the ſame reaſon to have followed them then, as we have to follow the multitude of proteſtants now. If we have no other reaſon than the *following the multitude*; this reaſon will do for all religions, and all times. And as this makes a great confuſion between light and darkneſs, good and evil; ſo you ſee how contradictory it is in itſelf, and abſurd to every man's view who will attend to it.

7. The unreaſonableneſs of this piece of conduct, and the reaſonableneſs of God's law againſt it, will farther appear, in that this is *to juſtify the wicked, and condemn the righteous; which are both alike abomination to the Lord* [c]. *To follow the multitude to do evil,* is to *juſtify the wicked* in all generations of the world, as well as in our own; and *to condemn the righteous* likewiſe, in all generations. And if either of theſe be *an abomination to the Lord*; how great an abomination muſt that be in which they are both united?

It is, I ſay, *to juſtify the wicked.* For, I have ſhewed you before, that thro'out the ſeveral ages of the world this hath been the cuſtom of the wicked, to follow the greateſt numbers, and to govern themſelves by the caprice of the multitude; and not by the reaſon of things, and the word of God.

[c] Prov. 17. 15.

Then,

Then, as it is *to juſtify the wicked*; ſo it is *to condemn the righteous.* It is to condemn the innocent, who would not *follow the multitude to do evil*; but would *obey God, rather than all mankind* together [d]. And can any man deſerve the name of a chriſtian, who governs himſelf by ſuch a principle as this is; "that he ought to follow great numbers of "people, without conſidering whether the "thing be good or juſt, true or falſe, that he is "to believe or practiſe as the multitude does;" when there is this great abſurdity attending it, that this will condemn all the ſaints and martyrs, thro'out all ages of the world, who went another way? If you do well in *following the multitude*, then they did ill who did not. If you are in the right, you certainly call them fools, who ſuffered as they did, for their oppoſition to the iniquities of the times wherein they lived; when they ſhould rather have conformed to the evil principles and practices of the multitude. You condemn Noah and Enoch, and all the patriarchs after the flood, who oppoſed the current of errors, and of ſins in their times. You do, in effect, ſay that Noah ſhould have *followed the multitude*; which if he had done, he would have periſhed with the old world: that Enoch ſhould have *followed the multitude*, inſtead of *walking with God* [e]; but if ſo, he had never been tranſlated into that

[d] Acts 5. 29. | [e] Gen. 5. 22.

bleſſed

bleſſed ſociety above. If Abraham had *followed the multitude*, he had never been the *father of the faithful* [f]; never had had thoſe gracious promiſes and favours beſtowed upon him, which are recorded in ſcripture.

If all ſhould have *followed the multitude*, God would have had no church in the world; nor could hiſtory have furniſhed us with any account of the ſufferings of martyrs. If this doctrine be true, that *the multitude* ought *to be followed:* then Daniel, and the three children, acted a very fooliſh part in expoſing themſelves to the jaws of hungry lions, and the flames of a fiery furnace; they would never, if they had been wiſe, have expoſed themſelves to theſe miſeries. If we are for *following a multitude to do evil:* we condemn thoſe excellent perſons, the prophets, who ſuffered by the multitude for ſpeaking the truth: we condemn thoſe who ſuffered martyrdom under the old teſtament, and *did not accept of deliverance* [g]; tho we find the apoſtle commends them for it.

And under the new teſtament, what *clouds of witneſſes* are there to the ſame purpoſe? To *follow the multitude to do evil*; this is to condemn the apoſtles, and others, who were martyrs for Jeſus. Thoſe who were put to death by innumerable kinds of torment; thoſe who glorified God in the flames, and *loved not their lives*, but expoſed themſelves to the

[f] Rom. 4. 16. | [g] Heb. 11. 35.

worſt

worſt of deaths for the word of God, and *for the teſtimony of Jeſus*; we condemn them all as perſons who were guilty of ſelf-murder, and expoſed themſelves to theſe ſufferings even for the ſake of error: for this was their error, and for which they ſuffered, becauſe they did not *follow the multitude*. If to *follow the multitude* be to do good, and to be in the right: then to follow the ſaints and martyrs of Jeſus, who were but few; this is to be in an error, to be in darkneſs, and *to do evil*. I do not think any one reaſons after this manner. But the *following the multitude*, tends to lead men into this way of reaſoning: and they who practiſe it muſt, in effect, *condemn the righteous*, as well as *juſtify the wicked*, in all generations.

8. It is moſt abſurd and unreaſonable *to follow the multitude to do* any thing which is *evil*; becauſe they are neither to judge us, nor can they protect us. If the multitude could inſure us, that it would be ſafe for us to truſt in their conduct; if they could ſave us from that power which will call us to account; then there might be ſomething ſaid in their behalf: or, if they were to try us themſelves, then we might expect poſſibly to meet with a favourable judgment from them. But is the multitude to judge us? No. But *God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the ſecrets of all men, by the man Chriſt Jeſus* [h]. We muſt all ſtand before the

[h] Acts 17. 31. Rom. 2. 16.

tribunal

tribunal of God. And then how much will they be confounded, who pleaſed themſelves in this world with hopes of ſafety from the multitude they followed? When the wicked ſhall *call upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon them* [i]; then it will be in vain to cite preſcription, and ſay this or that was the opinion or practice of *the multitude.* May not our Lord be ſuppoſed to reply, "The "multitude was not your rule; my word "was your rule: and I, and my prophets, "and apoſtles, were your patterns. You "ſhould have followed this *little flock* [k]; nor "them neither, any farther than they fol- "lowed me, and my word." The word of Chriſt, as it is now the rule of our thoughts and practice, ſo it will hereafter be the rule of judgment by which we ſhall be tried. It will be a vain thing then to pretend to numbers. Will thoſe numbers be able to defend us? Can they guard us from the ſtroke of divine judgment? Will thoſe trembling multitudes be able to interpoſe betwixt us and incenſed juſtice, when none of them can ſave their own ſouls? It will be in vain then for men to throw their crimes one upon another, when they ſhall not be able to produce any ſtrong reaſon or argument to do themſelves any kindneſs. We ſhall then find it will be of conſequence to have followed Chriſt, tho in a wilderneſs, in a ſtate of ſolitude, tho in

[i] Rev. 6. 16. | [k] Luke 12. 32.

the

the company but of a few; to have conducted ourſelves by the rule of God's word, and not to have ſubmitted our conſciences to the government of men.

But I think the abſurdity of this notion of *following the multitnde to do evil*, is ſufficiently expoſed. I do not doubt but every one ſees that it is a very unreaſonable thing. But the great difficulty is, for men to lay up ſuch a truth in their hearts; to keep it in their minds; to make uſe of it upon all occaſions, ſo as not to ſuffer themſelves to be abuſed by the ſpecious pretences of others. And now,

IV. Let me cloſe what I have ſaid by making a few reflections.

1. Methinks it gives us a lamentable view of mankind. What corruption, what degeneracy, what folly hath ſin brought upon the world? He who is wiſe, would rather be under the conduct of one wiſe man than under the direction of a million of fools. The generality of the world are ſo fooliſh, that they are not fit to guide one another. And what an unſafe thing muſt it be then for men to *follow the multitude?* How degenerate a creature is man? He *hath corrupted his way*; and yet he ſees it ſo little, that he puts himſelf under the blind conduct of his neighbours, who are as corrupt and degenerate as himſelf.

2. This

2. This ſhews us what a great advantage it is to have the word of God for our direction. Let us *make God's teſtimonies our counſellors* [l]; let us *account his law the truth* [m], and *hate every falſe way* [n]. When we *behold the tranſgreſſors*, let us *be grieved*; and by no means be prevailed on to imitate them, but make the word of God the conſtant guide of our thoughts and actions. This is the beſt way of ſhewing our thankfulneſs to the Almighty for this great advantage he hath given us.

3. Let us be aſhamed wherein we have prevaricated in this matter, and gone contrary to the word of God. Let us examine ourſelves impartially, whether we have not endeavoured to ſatisfy ourſelves from the dictates of men, rather than from the word of God? Have we not truſted too much to great men, and to good men? If we have received truth itſelf, how came we by it? We ought to have ſought the truth where it was to be found; and not to have taken it upon a preſumption that it was in the multitude. Some people may hold right notions, tho from wrong principles: yet they ſin againſt God; becauſe they are not ſatisfied from grounds of reaſon, and the teſtimony of ſcripture, but from the multitude whence they take them.

[l] Pſal. 119. 24.
[m] *Ver.* 142.
[n] *Ver.* 128.

4. Let me therefore exhort you all to keep this in remembrance, *not to follow the multitude to do evil.* It ought to be a comfort to thoſe who love truth in its ſimplicity, in a reflection upon their conduct, to find that they have valued it above all the world; and that tho it hath expoſed them to reproach, and many inconveniences, yet they have loved the truth, and ſought it where it was to be found; and have begged of God that he would *lead* them *in the paths of truth and righteouſneſs, for his own name-ſake:* that he would *remove from* them *the way of lying, and grant them his law graciouſly* [p].

Let ſuch noble and generous ſouls, who are free from the ſordid and baſe deſigns of the world rejoice, that that truth which they have eſpouſed is more valuable than all the world. *Buy the truth,* ſays the wiſe man, *and ſell it not* [q]. *For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of ſilver; and the gain thereof than fine gold. It is more precious than rubies: and all things we can deſire, are not to be compared with it* [r]. We ought therefore to *buy the truth* at any rate, and *to ſell it* for no conſideration whatever. It behoves us therefore to value it, to prize it, and to continue the ſame diligence in the inveſtigation of truth for the future. It behoves us to have a care of vain conceit, and of being too poſitive of our own opinions and practices;

[o] Pſal. 119. 29.
[p] Prov. 23. 23.
[q] Prov. 3. 14, 15.

and

and to make it our chief concern that we may be able to *render a reaſon of the hope that is in us* [f]. *Then ſhall we not be aſhamed, when we have reſpect to all God's commands* [s], and have learned to *hate every falſe way* [t]. Truth is abundantly more valuable than all things that can be compared with it; and then certainly it is infinitely to be preferred to error: and therefore how numerous ſoever the multitudes may be who are on the ſide of error, that doth not change its nature, or leſſen its evil. Let us then have that regard to truth, and righteouſneſs, and holineſs, which becomes us; going on diligently and induſtriouſly, ſearching after truth, diffident of ourſelves; and examining our hearts and lives, whether we do all the duties preſcribed us, and whether we make an advancement in our knowledge and ſpiritual ſtature, becoming the means allowed us. If we have received truth in any reſpect, let us not pride ourſelves above others. And if it be a truth, which but few are apprized of; let us conſider that God hath given us abundance of honour, in that he hath enlightned us. But let not this make us vain in our own conceit: let us not think that we are better than others, on the one hand; or, on the other, be tempted to abandon the truth we have received, becauſe there are but few who profeſs it. If we are ſatisfied,

[f] 1 Pet. 3. 15.
[s] Pſal. 119. 6.
[t] *Ver.* 128.

upon good grounds, that what we profeſs is the truth; let us carry it with all becoming modeſty in our converſation towards others, and endeavour, in the moſt compaſſionate manner, *to inſtruct the ignorant, and them that are out of the way* [u]. And let us not think that we have already attained all that is attainable: but let us go on more and more towards perfection; that at laſt we may hear that joyful ſound from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *Well done, good and faithful ſervants, enter into the joy of your Lord* [v].

[u] Heb. 5. 2. | [v] Mat. 25. 21.

SER-

SERMON IV.

Keeping GOD's COMMANDMENTS the true character of our love to him.

Preach'd at

BARBICAN, November 28, 1708.

1 JOHN V. 3.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

THO the beginning of this epiſtle does not carry the name of the apoſtle John; yet it hath not, I think, in any time been doubted whether it was written by him. But it is ſuppoſed that he forbore to uſe the common ſalutations at the beginning and end of this epiſtle, and did not mention his name or character as an apoſtle, as he does in the ſuceeding epiſtles, becauſe this was written for

the ſake of thoſe converted Jews, and other chriſtians, who were ſcattered among the Parthians: who, not being ſubject to the Roman emperor, if there had been letters carried about, bearing the names of perſons who lived under the Roman government, might have been liable to ſuſpicion. It is therefore ſuppoſed that the apoſtle, to avoid all objections of that kind which might be made to the chriſtians, wrote this epiſtle in ſuch a manner, that it might paſs as written by a nameleſs author. However, it breathes the ſame ſpirit, and is written in the ſame ſtyle that is to be obſerved in the other epiſtles of John, and in his goſpel. In the writing of which goſpel it is remarkable, that he takes ſpecial care to record thoſe ſpeeches of our Saviour which were moſt proper to excite in the minds of chriſtians love to God, and to one another. And as this diſciple had a ſpecial intereſt in the favour of Jeſus Chriſt, was called the beloved diſciple, and therefore did *lean upon his boſom* [w], that is, ſat next him at table, it being the cuſtom of the ancients to lean one upon another as they ſat at meat; ſo his mind was deeply enough impreſſed with that love which Chriſt manifeſted to him, to ſet him upon exhorting chriſtians to make a return of ardent love to God and Chriſt, and to ſhew this by their affection to one another. Therefore it is a principal

[w] John 13. 23.

part

part of his design, in this epistle, to excite the followers of Christ to mutual love and amity. He breathes here the same spirit as he does when he is recording in the gospel what our Saviour says upon this agreeable argument: so that tho his name is not in the epistle, yet the style shews sufficiently who was the penman of it.

It is supposed that it was written with a design to oppose the corrupt doctrines which were advanced among christians, after our Lord's ascension; which doctrines did abundance of mischief: that the apostle John was now very much advanced in years; and having seen what attacks were made by Satan and his emissaries against the christian doctrine, he wrote this epistle to fortify christians against the growing contagion. And we may observe that he speaks of some whom he calls *antichrists*, that is, enemies of Christ; of some who *did not confess that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God* [x].

In the beginning of the epistle he speaks of the divinity of our Saviour, as well as towards the latter end of it; as it seems, in opposition to those who denied him to be the *Word of God*, that is, to be the second person in the Trinity. In this he seems to oppose the Ebionites, who early sprang up in the church, and denied his divinity; in the other the Basilidians, who denied his

[x] 1 John 2. 22. *Chap.* 4. 2, 3, 15. 5. 1, 5.

humanity. Then he ſpeaks of ſome who pretended they were without ſin: of whom the apoſtle ſays they were *lyars*; perſons who pretended either to have arrived to ſuch a perfection that they kept the law of God perfectly, or elſe imagined they were put into ſuch a condition that no ſin could defile them, or render them guilty.

It is evident he wrote againſt ſome who were very looſe in their morals: who pretended to *know God*, to *walk in the light*, *and not to walk in darkneſs*, to *abide in God*, to *be born of him*, to *dwell in him*, *and he in them* [y]; who, while they affected ſuch ſpecious privileges as theſe were, and would appear in the world to be very intimate in their communion with God, yet did not walk becoming the goſpel. Therefore the apoſtle makes it his buſineſs, in this epiſtle, to ſhew who are the perſons that *walk in the light*, and *are born of God*; tells us they are thoſe who are holy; that *thoſe who are born of God*, *cannot ſin*; that *they love God*, *keep his commandments*, and *love the brethren* [z]. He argues at length upon this; and ſhews it is a vain thing to pretend to love God, unleſs we love the children of God, thoſe who are truly chriſtians. This is oppoſed to that hatred, envy, and malice, which occaſion diſcord in the church of Chriſt. This is in general the ſcope of the apoſtle's deſign;

[y] 1 John 1. 6. *Chap.* 2. 9. *Ver.* 26, 29. *Chap.* 4. 7——11.

[z] 1 John 2. 7, 9. *Chap.* 3. 9.

to

to eſtabliſh the doctrine of the chriſtian religion, and to ſecure the minds of people from being corrupted with ill morals. And after he had diſcourſed of theſe marks and characters, of *being born of God*, *walking in him*, &c. and had ſhewn that it muſt appear by our *loving of him*, and *loving his people*; in the beginning of this chapter he ſays, *Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God:* where he ſeems to reaſſume what he had been ſpeaking of before. Whereas he had declared thoſe who did not believe after this manner, to be antichriſt; ſo he ſays, thoſe who did believe, were *born of God.* The meaning is, *Whoſoever believes that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, believes this propoſition, and walks correſpondent to that belief, *is born of God.* It follows; *And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him alſo that is begotten of him:* i. e. as ſome interpret it, every one who loves God, loves Chriſt. And every one who loves God and Chriſt, loves the children of God; thoſe who are begotten of him, true believers. Then it is added, *ver.* 2. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.* As if he ſhould ſay, do not miſtake yourſelves, that you love the children of God, becauſe perhaps you love ſuch to whom you are related according to the fleſh; ſuch, whoſe converſation is agreeable to you; ſuch, the cultivation of whoſe friendſhip is profitable to you in your concerns. This is not enough:

but we know that we love them aright, when we love them for their Father's ſake, when our love to them ariſes from religious principles; becauſe hereby it appears we keep the commandments of God: and if we love God, we ſhall keep the reſt of the commandments, beſides thoſe which require us to love our fellow-chriſtians. Then follow the words of our text: *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

For this is the love of God; that is, this is the fruit of our love to God, *that we keep his commandments:* herein it moſt evidently appears that we love God, if we keep his commandments.

And his commandments are not grievous. This is the doctrine which our Saviour himſelf preached: which this apoſtle took good notice of, and therefore recorded it in his goſpel; as you ſee in John 14. 14. where our Lord ſays, *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* As much as to ſay, if you love me ſincerely, as you pretend to do, it will appear by your keeping my laws. And in the ſame chapter, *ver.* 23, 24. *Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my ſayings: and the word which you hear, is not mine, but the Father's which ſent me. If any man love me, he will keep my words*; and

he

he that loveth me not, keepeth not my ſayings. And then in *Chap.* 15. *ver.* 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you.* You are then truly my friends; and I will acknowledge this to be a proof of your love. In the ſecond epiſtle of John you find the apoſtle ſpeaks after the ſame manner: *ver.* 6. *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, that as ye have heard from the beginning, ye ſhould walk in it.* So that you ſee this was the doctrine inculcated by our Saviour, and John took it from him. He expreſſes himſelf in theſe ſeveral paſſages ſo fully to this purpoſe, that it muſt needs be very eaſy to underſtand his meaning; that God will not accept of any mens pretences of love, unleſs it appears by their obſervation of his commands. In the words of the text there are two things in general.

I. The character of true love to God. It will appear in *keeping his commandments.*

II. Here is either the amplification of this, in ſaying *his commandments are not grievous*; as much as to ſay, they are not grievous to them who love God: or elſe, here is the character of God's commandments in general, that they are not, in themſelves, when duly and rightly conſidered, grievous or burdenſom. According to the firſt ſenſe, the apoſtle

ſhews that it is not ſufficient for a man to keep ſome of God's commandments, or to appear to keep his commandments only by abſtaining from certain groſs vices, or doing ſome good works; unleſs he does them with ſuch a ſpirit and temper as is agreeable to love, ſuch as ſhews that he loves God: that if he does them from a principle of love to God, then the divine commandments will not be grievous to him; he will *delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man* [a]. According to the latter ſenſe, it ſeems an anſwer to an objection. If it be ſaid, *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*; it may be anſwered, but theſe commandments are very difficult and ſevere, and it is a very hard matter for the mind of a man to be brought to the obſervance of thoſe precepts which are ſo very ſtrict: the apoſtle takes off this objection, in ſhewing that *the commands of God are not grievous.* We are to conſider,

I. The character of true love to God. It appears in *keeping his commandments.* And here I ſhall,

1. Conſider what is ſignified by *the love of God.*

[a] Rom. 7. 22.

2. What

2. What by *keeping his commandments.* And then,

3. Endeavour to prove to you, that this is a certain ſign of our *love to God,* if we *keep his commandments*; and that it is impoſſible that we ſhould truly love God, if we do not truly obſerve them.

1. We are to conſider what is ſignified here by *the love of God.* Every one perceives that *love of God* here ſignifies love to God; as *the faith of Chriſt* [b] ſometimes ſignifies faith in Chriſt. But love is that affection of the mind by which we have reſpect unto ſome object that is capable of giving us pleaſure; and our reflecting therefore upon this, produces that in our minds which is called love. But as there are various actions of the ſoul about this, it is neceſſary to conſider it a little more narrowly, that we may ſhew that the love of God cannot be proved to be in any man, unleſs he keeps his commandments.

Sometimes our value and eſteem of a perſon, or thing, is called love. So the pſalmiſt ſpeaks of his *loving the law of God* [c], becauſe he had a high reſpect and value for it. And ſo we may be ſaid to love perſons with whom we are converſant, becauſe we have a high eſteem of their learning, knowledge, virtues, and agreeable temper.

[b] Gal. 2. 20.

[c] Pſal. 119. 97.

Again:

Again: it ſignifies deſire of communion, or converſation; the deſire of the enjoyment of the object we love. So *the love of money* [d], ſignifies the earneſt deſire of amaſſing much riches together. And *the love of the world* [e], ſignifies the deſire of procuring great temporal advantages; an earneſt and ſolicitous deſire. Thus a man is ſaid to love happineſs when he deſires it, tho at preſent it may be he is miſerable.

Farther: ſometimes love ſignifies a due complacential reflection, which we make upon what we do at preſent enjoy, or what we have before enjoyed. So we find that love is ſometimes underſtood in the holy ſcripture. Thus the pſalmiſt ſpeaks of his *loving the habitation of God's houſe, and the place where his honour dwells* [f]; to ſignify thereby his love to God, becauſe he had taſted there how grateful it was to have communion with God, which excited his affections. And this complacential view, or reflection of the mind, is called love. Thus the parent is ſaid to love his children when he conſiders their welfare and good, ſo as to take delight and pleaſure in what they at preſent enjoy: he is pleaſed with the conſideration of their welfare. This is a complacential love.

There is alſo another kind of love, which conſiſts in our deſires to make ſome returns to the object beloved. And this may be

[d] 1 Tim. 6. 10.
[e] 1 John 2. 15.
[f] Pſal. 26. 8.

partly

partly upon our own account: that we may continue to ourſelves the friendſhip of a man, we are willing to make returns to him who hath expreſſed kindneſs to us. And it may be partly from a ſenſe of an obligation to gratitude, and the conviction of the fitneſs of the thing in its own nature, that kindneſs ſhould be ſhewn to thoſe who ſhew kindneſs to us; and that we ſhould do that which is pleaſing and agreeable to them.

Now to bring this matter to the ſubject in hand:

(1.) *The love of God*, or our love to God, ſignifies our high value and eſteem of him, our high value and eſteem of his perfections: for while we conſider ſeriouſly, and reaſon juſtly; while we behold that which is in itſelf excellent and orderly, it affords an agreeable thought and reflection in our minds. For as man was made for knowledge, made a rational creature; he is capable, on many occaſions, of diſcerning where beauty and order is, where there is ſomething amiable and excellent in itſelf: and while he reflects upon this, and the juſtneſs of his own reaſonings about it, he cannot chooſe but be pleaſed with his thoughts. We cannot, I ſay, chooſe but be pleaſed, when we think juſtly and reaſonably, and when we deſire any thing that is excellent in itſelf. So that a high value for God, on the account of his perfections, may be termed love to him; or, as in our text, *the love of him.*

(2.) It

(2.) It alſo ſignifies our deſire of union with God; our deſire to participate of thoſe bleſſings he is capable of beſtowing; our deſire of converſation and communion with him. For if we are made ſenſible that he hath perfections in himſelf, which are amiable, and that he is capable of making his creatures happy; then *to love God*, is to deſire to be made happy by the communication of thoſe bleſſings which he is able to beſtow upon us. So the ſpouſe in Solomon's Song ſays, ſhe *is ſick of love* [g]: that is, her deſire is very importunate and ſolicitous to have communion with Jeſus Chriſt. There is an uneaſineſs attends the mind in love, while it is filled with deſire after the object beloved, and that object is not enjoyed. If we deſire the converſation and amity of a friend, who has, on ſome occaſion or other, withdrawn the ſignifications of his former kindneſs and favour from us; there is an uneaſineſs in that importunate deſire. However, this is called *love*: for this uneaſineſs is caus'd from the want of the enjoyment of that pleaſure which is attainable from the object beloved.

(3.) *To love God* alſo ſignifies to take pleaſure in the enjoyment of God, in the enjoyment of communion with him: that is, to take pleaſure in the notices we have of him; to take pleaſure in the participation of thoſe

[g] Cant. 2. 5.

graces

graces and virtues which make us conformable to him; to take pleaſure in thoſe promiſes and aſſurances which he has given us, of farther inſtances of his favour and kindneſs; to have a joyful reflection in our minds upon the account of the good and proper ſituation of our ſouls, while we have the great privileges and advantages of the favour of God, which contain all thoſe bleſſings which are proper to be beſtowed upon us. A reflection upon what we either have enjoyed, or do at preſent enjoy; this creates a complacency in our minds, makes us take pleaſure in God, and delight ourſelves in him. As the pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *Delight thyſelf in the Lord* [h]. And ſo the love of God is expreſs'd to us, in his *delighting* [i], and *rejoicing* [k], in his people. But then,

(4.) Our *love to God* ſignifies our deſire of doing that which is pleaſing and agreeable to him. When we love men with a love of kindneſs, it is called a love of benevolence: that is, we wiſh them well, and deſire to do them good offices, and oblige them what we can. But God is infinitely above what we can do for him; *Our goodneſs extends not to him* [l]: he hath infinite happineſs in himſelf, as he is all-ſufficient. But to ſpeak after the manner of men; we may do things which are well-pleaſing to God, which he takes as grateful returns for the love and goodneſs

[h] Pſal. 37. 4.
[i] Num. 14. 8.
[k] Deut. 28. 63.
[l] Pſal. 16. 2.

he

he beſtows on us. In this our love is operative. And this is the common acceptation of our *love of God*; when the thought of pleaſing him is agreeable to us. And indeed when we truly love any object, any man whom we take for our friend; it muſt certainly be a great pleaſure to us to do any thing that is acceptable to him. Now God is pleaſed to expreſs himſelf after this manner: that he *delights in the righteous* [m]; that *their ſervices are acceptable to him*; and that *he ſmells a ſweet ſavour in their ſacrifices* [n]. Not that we can add any pleaſure to him who enjoys infinite happineſs in himſelf: but hereby is ſignified to us, that theſe things are as agreeable to the will of God, as when we do good offices to men we are ſaid to be pleaſing to them.

Speaking after the manner of men, therefore, this is *the love of God*: highly to value and eſteem him; to deſire the enjoyment of him by the communication of his grace and glory, and by the comforts of his free ſpirit; to take complacency and delight in the review of that communion we have had with God; to reflect with delight upon what we at preſent do enjoy of him; and to have an earneſt and importunate deſire to pleaſe him, to do that which is agreeable to him.

[m] Jer. 9. 24. | [n] Phil. 4. 18.

2. We

2. We are to consider what it is to *keep his commandments.* And this is so plain, that it needs not to be insisted on. To *keep the commandments of God,* is to *do them* [o]. When God gave his law to Israel of old, there were very solemn and repeated charges given them that they should *keep the law* [p], as it was written, very safe. The two tables were laid up in the holy of holies [q]: and the people were ordered to *keep them in their houses*; to *write them upon the posts of their houses, and upon their gates*; and to *bind them for a sign upon their heads, and place them as frontlets between their eyes* [r]: and all this to signify of how great importance it was to have a constant regard to the commands of God. They were *to speak of them when they sat in their houses, when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up*; they were *to teach them their children and servants,* &c. So that *to keep God's commandments* is, in the constant tenor of our lives, to have a regard to his laws; to observe them ourselves, and promote holiness and purity among others, as much as possibly we can.

To *keep the commands of God,* is to make it our business constantly *to do his will* in all the instances of it, which may be presented to us; in all relations, and every circumstance of life; to be pious towards God; to

[o] Deut 4. 6. *Ch.* 5. 29—*ult.*
[p] Exod. 25. 16. & *Ver.* 21.
[q] Deut. 10. 2.
[r] *Chap.* 6. 1——9.

be juſt and charitable towards men; to be ſober, humble, modeſt, temperate, and meek; ſo to govern our paſſions within, and ſo to conduct ourſelves in the manner of our lives, that we may do nothing contrary to the will of God. I proceed therefore,

3. To ſhew you how it appears that *this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*; that the *keeping the commandments of God*, is a certain ſign and demonſtration of our love to him. And indeed the phraſe imports that there is no loving of God unleſs we will do his will; unleſs we will keep his commandments. I do not mean that we muſt perfectly keep the laws of God; for there is *no man lives and ſins not* [f]: but this muſt be the diſpoſition of our minds, and tenor of our lives. And if we take but a ſhort review of what I have ſaid concerning *the love of God*; it will ſoon appear to be a demonſtration that we muſt *keep his commandments, if we love him.* For,

(1.) According to that notion of love, which ſignifies a high value and eſteem of God; if we value him upon the account of his perfections, it is certain we ſhall have a due regard to his commands: if we highly value his perfections, whether thoſe we call natural or moral, as they all ſhew forth his glory; it muſt certainly diſpoſe us to conform to the will of that Being who is ſo

[f] Eccleſ. 7. 20.

glorious

glorious and excellent in himſelf. If we, in any proper manner, admire him for his power and authority over us; then we ſhall ſhew our regard to his authority, by being obedient to his commands. If we value his wiſdom; then we ſhall value his laws, which bear ſuch characters of wiſdom upon them. If we value his holineſs; we cannot but value his laws, wherein this perfection ſo conſpicuouſly appears. And ſo if we have a true value for the goodneſs of God; we cannot but be naturally engag'd from thence to obey him. His laws are ſpiritual, *holy, juſt, and good*[s]; and therefore they muſt needs be valued by us, if we have regard to theſe perfections of the divine nature, and have ſuch a veneration for them as becomes us. Can a man pretend ſincerely to love God, and not to love his laws? To love thoſe perfections, which he who believes there is a God muſt own to be in him, and at the ſame time refuſe ſubjection to his precepts, is a groſs contradiction. Can we have a due eſteem for his holineſs, juſtice, and goodneſs, and yet violate his laws? Tis certain we cannot. For, to do that, is to ſay that he is not wiſe who hath given us thoſe laws: for if they are wiſe inſtitutions, why ſhould we not obey them? Or that he is not juſt: for if there is nothing in them but what is juſt and reaſonable, why ſhould they not be

[s] Rom. 7. 12.

obſerved? Or that he is not good and merciful in giving ſuch precepts: for if his goodneſs and mercy appear in the laws he hath enjoin'd, why do we not obſerve them? And certainly the goodneſs of God, as well as his righteouſneſs and wiſdom, appears in his laws, in a great many inſtances: nay, in all of them, in regard to the end to which they point; for our due obſervance of them, is to be rewarded with eternal happineſs.

Therefore you ſee it is inconſiſtent with loving of God, for us to violate and break thoſe laws which he hath given us; I mean, to live in ſuch a courſe of life as is oppoſite to the divine commands. If we love God, we ſhall love his reſemblance; and there is a glorious reſemblance of him in his divine precepts. He who has a true love for God, delights in every diſcovery of the divine perfections which is preſented to his view: he ſees they are truly amiable and lovely, and therefore has a becoming value for them: he loves to ſurvey the works of God, and to inquire into the effects of his power and providence; becauſe they bear the character of their great author. And thus alſo he who loves God, and admires his perfections, will ſee the glory of them ſhine in the perfection of his holy law after ſuch a manner, that he cannot chooſe but have a delight in thoſe commands; and, to be ſure, he will then make it his buſineſs to obſerve them.

(2.) If

(2.) If you consider this love with respect to union, and a desire of communion and conversation with God, a desire to be united to him, to enjoy him, to have our minds filled with the knowledge of God, to be made to resemble him, to be rendred capable of being happy in the enjoyment of him both here in the state of grace, and hereafter in the state of glory; if we so love God, it will appear by our *keeping his commands:* for keeping the commands of God, is the means of our enjoying that communion with him of which we are speaking. As he converses with us by his word, so do we converse with him thereby. This is the true way to have communion with him: for he hath promised he *will be near to those who* thus *seek him*; and that he *will reward those who observe his righteous precepts. I love them*, says he, *that love me*; *and those that seek me early shall find me* [t]. And to the same purpose our Saviour speaks to his disciples: *If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever* [u]. *Keep my commandments*; *and I will pray the Father for you:* you shall have joy in your minds, you shall have peace in your consciences, the joy of the Holy Spirit; you shall maintain sweet and continued communion with God, *if you love him*, and *keep his commandments.* Again, in the same chapter: *Jesus said, If*

[t] Prov. 8. 17. | [u] John 14. 15, 16.

a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him [v]. *If any man love me, he will keep my words.* And what will be the conſequence of this? *My Father will love him*, &c. It muſt be acknowledg'd indeed, the love of God preceeds our love to him; that love which we call the love of good-will to him. And as Chriſt *loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood* [w]; ſo the Father's ſending his Son into the world on this gracious errand, was the effect of his love. And it is by this love that the firſt grace is planted in our ſouls. But then, as the love of good-will prevents all our love to him, that is, goes before it; for *herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us* [x]; and *we love him, becauſe he firſt loved us* [y]: ſo it is the love of complacency which is afterwards ſhewn; *I love them that love me.* So here: *I and my Father will love him, and will come to him, and make our abode with him. We will manifeſt ourſelves to him:* as our Saviour expreſſes himſelf a little before. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf to him* [z]. God *will manifeſt himſelf* to us by

[v] John 14. 23.
[w] Rev. 3. 5.
[x] 1 John 4. 10.
[y] *Ver.* 19.
[z] John 14. 21.

divine

divine truths, which he will communicate to our minds: he *will take up his abode* with us by the operations of his Holy Spirit: he *will dwell* in us by his free ſpirit, as a comforter to chear and revive our ſouls. So that if we love God truly, ſo as to deſire the enjoyment of him, that pleaſure which is to be found in communion with him; then it is certain we ſhall *keep his commandments*; becauſe this is the way and the means which he hath eſtabliſhed in order to obtain theſe moſt valuable ends. As this, I ſay, is ordained by God as the means and way of our enjoyment of him; ſo if we earneſtly deſire the end, it will appear by our uſing the proper means. It is thus in the nature of the thing itſelf: for *how can two walk together, except they be agreed*[a]? Is there *any communion betwixt Chriſt and Belial*[b]? Is there any communion betwixt God and one who goes on in a courſe of vice? Or can any ſuch thing be? How can one love God ſo as to deſire communion with him, and at the ſame time do that which is utterly inconſiſtent in its own nature with that communion? How can there be communion where there is no reſemblance, no likeneſs? Therefore, in the nature of the thing, there cannot be any enjoyment of God, or ſincere deſire after it; there cannot be in us any love to God, properly ſpeaking, unleſs we keep his

[a] Amos 3. 3. | [b] 2 Cor. 6. 15.

commandments. For, to ſay we love a thing, and do all we can to render ourſelves uncapable of enjoying it, is the greateſt abſurdity that can be.

(3.) As love ſignifies that delight and complacency which we actually take in reflecting upon what we love; it is evident we cannot *love God*, if we do not *keep his commandments*. With what pleaſure can we reflect upon the communion we have had with him, if we have not a delight in his commandments? If indeed it were poſſible for us to have had communion with God, without being conformable to his will; ſomething might be ſaid for this. But ſeeing it is impoſſible to have communion with him without likeneſs and aſſimilation to him; and ſeeing God will never grant us the enjoyment of this bleſſing unleſs we obſerve his laws; it is impoſſible we can take any complacency and delight in him without this ſuppoſition. As for the wicked, when they view the perfections of the Almighty, when they behold that he is a juſt and a holy God; this, inſtead of giving them joy and ſatisfaction, fills them with ſorrow and trouble. Therefore they do not deſire to have any communion with him, or any knowledge of his perfections: *God is not in all their thoughts*[c]. Then, as to having communion with God in the way he hath preſcribed; they ſay to the Almighty, *Depart from us, for we deſire not*

[c] Pſal. 10. 4.

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the knowledge of thy ways [d]. They can take no complacency in that to which they are utterly averſe: nor can they make any pleaſant reflection upon theſe things, while their minds are in a ſtate of enmity to God, *while they are enemies to him thro' wicked works* [e].

(4.) It appears alſo plain, that thoſe who *love God*, muſt needs *keep his commandments*, in that ſenſe wherein love to God ſignifies the deſire to do that which is conformable to his will, and agreeable to him. For is it poſſible that thoſe who love God, and make this their pleaſure and their happineſs, to enjoy communion with him; is it poſſible that theſe ſhould have no grateful thoughts, and that they ſhall forbear to conſider what they ſhall *render to him for all his benefits* [f]? Is any thing more natural than for love to attract love; or that the kindneſs which God manifeſts towards us, ſhould engage us to conſider what we ſhall do for him? Now ſeeing he is above wanting any thing from us, and *our goodneſs cannot extend to him* [g]; the ſtudious and grateful ſoul will, however, conſider what is pleaſing and agreeable to him. And nothing certainly can be ſo agreeable to God as his own glorious likeneſs: therefore that which neareſt reſembles him muſt be moſt beloved by him. His Son, who is *the brightneſs of his glory*,

[d] Job 21. 14.
[e] Col. 1. 24.
[f] Pſal. 116. 12.
[g] Pſal. 16. 2.

and

and the expreſs image of his perſon [h], is infinitely beloved by him, becauſe he is infinitely lovely, having the ſame perfections. And ſo amongſt men; thoſe muſt needs be moſt beloved by him with a complacential love, who are moſt conformed to his image.

He who loves God, and deſires to be happy with him, muſt neceſſarily thus expreſs his love by keeping his commandments after the beſt manner he can; and that not only out of gratitude, but likewiſe on the account of his own intereſt. For if we know what is well-pleaſing to God, we know what is agreeable to him will be rewarded by him; and the thought of a reward for our love, will always prove a ſtrong motive to increaſe it. And thus intereſt, as well as gratitude and duty, oblige us to love God, and keep his commandments: there is nothing wherein we can imitate God ſo much, nothing that can be ſo grateful and acceptable to him. Therefore our ſervices are called *acceptable ſervices*; *incenſe*, and *ſacrifices of a ſweet ſavour* [i], when they are performed aright; to ſhew that as they are conformable to God's will, ſo they will be return'd upon us with unſpeakable bleſſings.

Thus have I plainly prov'd to you, that on whatſoever ſide we view this matter; however we conſider the notion of love, as it ſignifies an eſteem and value of God; as it

[h] Heb. 1. 3. | [i] Rom. 12. 1. Eph. 5. 10.

ſignifies a deſire of intimate communion with him; as it ſignifies a complacency, or a reflection upon that pleaſure which we have enjoyed, or do enjoy in communion with him; or as it ſignifies a deſire to pleaſe him, and do that which is acceptable to him: this *love*, which way ſoever we take it, muſt needs appear in *keeping God's commandments*; and without keeping his commandments, it can by no means appear at all: but, on the contrary, it appears that we do not love God, nor pleaſe him; that we do not value and eſteem him as we ought to do; that we do not ſeek our own happineſs in the enjoyment of him; that we cannot take complacency in him, and in his perfections; and that we cannot truly deſire, and endeavour to pleaſe him: all this, I ſay, appears, if we do not keep his commandments. *Ye that love the Lord hate evil* [k], ſays the pſalmiſt: and, *If you love me, keep my commandments* [l], ſays our Saviour. And, *this is the love of God*, ſays our apoſtle, *that we keep his commandments.* But,

II. The other thing contained in the text deſerves conſideration: *His commandments are not grievous.*

If we take this in the firſt ſenſe, that *his commandments are not grievous to them that love him*; the thing itſelf is plain and evi-

[k] Pſal. 97. 10. [l] John 14. 15.

dent,

dent, and likewiſe ſhews the excellent temper of the minds of thoſe who love God. They take pleaſure and delight in his commandments. When they ſerve him, it is not with the obedience of ſlaves, merely becauſe they are afraid of ſome puniſhment that will befal them; nor merely on the account of God's ſeeing them, and becauſe to him they muſt be accountable: but they obey him out of pleaſure, becauſe they are convinced of the reaſonableneſs and excellency of his precepts; becauſe they are ſtudious to make ſome grateful returns to his favour; becauſe they know they conſult their own happineſs, as well as perform their duty, in keeping his commands. It cannot be grievous to them; for love makes every thing eaſy. Love makes us take pleaſure in doing things which are difficult in themſelves, if it be to oblige a friend, for whom we have a value and eſteem: and eſpecially if our friend has laid any conſiderable obligations upon us; we embrace heartily the opportunity, becauſe there is an uneaſineſs in our minds till we have an opportunity to expreſs our love and gratitude to thoſe to whom we are obliged. And if this be carried ſo far amongſt men, that ſometimes they will even *lay down their lives for them whom they* dearly *love*; that for a friend *a man will even dare to die* [m]; certainly thoſe who love God, thoſe

[m] Rom. 5. 7.

who

who have grateful and generous thoughts becoming chriſtians, who have a true ſenſe of the divine love, they can think nothing too much to do for him, nor any thing too hard to ſuffer for him who has done ſo much for them. If there be any of God's commandments grievous, it muſt be that which obliges us to ſelf-denial and ſuffering for the ſake of religion. And the trouble and burden even of this command which ſeems ſo ſevere, is, in a great meaſure, taken off from thoſe perſons who love God. Love renders their ſervice eaſy; and makes them take pleaſure in mortifying their ſins, and in ſuffering for the ſake of religion. From this principle the apoſtle rejoiced in his bonds, and in his tribulation; and was willing *to fill up what was behind of the afflictions of Chriſt in his fleſh for his body's ſake, which is the church* [n]. And to ſo high a degree hath this temper of mind riſen in many of the martyrs of Chriſt, that they have ſeemed to be inſenſible of their pains and torments; their minds were ſo ſtrictly applied to their duty, and ſo much filled with the love of God. They knew it to be ſo noble and excellent a thing to do what God requires, that they have thought they could not ſuffer too much for the ſake of him who had done ſo much for them. This made one of them complain that he had no more lives to lay down for Jeſus Chriſt.

[n] Col. 1. 24.

As

As it thus appears, that *the commandments of God are not grievous to them that love him*; ſo if we conſider this expreſſion in the other ſenſe: if we conſider it as the character of the divine commands in general, that they *are not grievous*; this will alſo very evidently appear. It may juſtly be ſaid ſo of them, in a comparative ſenſe; and it may be ſaid ſo of them conſidered abſolutely, in their own nature.

1. Comparatively: they are *not grievous*. If we compare the laws of God, the ſevereſt of them, with thoſe bonds and yokes which are impoſed on us by ſin and Satan, and by the men of this world; we ſhall find that theſe are hard taſk-maſters, but that it is very unreaſonable to call God an auſtere maſter. What a terrible ſlavery is it for a man to be hurried by the violence of his own paſſions, and of his own appetites, which are ever preſſing and importunate, and can never be ſatisfied with the things of this world? to be always perplexed with *vanity, and vexation of ſpirit*; and yet always to perform over again the ſame things, endure the ſame toil, and the ſame labour, only to attain the ſame end? for perſons to have the moſt ardent deſires after happineſs; and yet to be ſo fooliſh as to imagine they ſhall attain it by earthly enjoyments, and, notwithſtanding the many convictions and diſappointments they meet with, ſtill to run the ſame round of folly over and over again? Is it not

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a wretched ſlavery for men *to be led captive by the devil at his will* [o]; to be hurried by their own paſſions, like the poor man who continually ran among the tombs; who was not only unfit to converſe with others, but exerciſed cruelty and violence upon himſelf, cutting his body with ſtones, and could not be tamed by any man [p]? This is the madneſs and folly of the minds of men, when ſubject to the government of Satan, or the dominion of their own luſts. But ſurely it is far otherwiſe with the divine commands. There is nothing in them that makes ſuch diſturbance in the minds of men; nothing but what allays and qualifies the paſſions, and brings them into rectitude and order. And there are other conſiderations beſides, which will ſhew that theſe *are not grievous*, comparatively ſpeaking. Tho there be ſome ſelf-denial in religion, ſome trouble and pains, ſome difficulty to *enter in at the ſtrait gate* [q]; tho the *cutting off right hands*, and *plucking out right eyes* [r], which the commands of God require, carries in them ſomething which looks ſevere; yet theſe ſeem more grievous at firſt than they will appear afterwards. And they *are not grievous*, in compariſon of the ſlavery and ſervitude in which people muſt be, while they attend to the voice of Satan, and are *led captive* by their own vile affections, while they become *the ſervants*

[o] 2 Tim. 2. 26.
[p] Mark 5.
[q] Mat. 7. 14.
[r] *Chap.* 5. 29, 30.

of

of men, accompany them in their crimes, their abſurdities and follies, favour them in their vices, and ſerve them in their ſins, and ſuffer themſelves to be infected by their evil examples. This is indeed very grievous: but the commands of God are not ſo, when compared with theſe taſk-maſters.

Moreover: under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, in a ſpecial manner, *the commands of God are not grievous*, in this comparative ſenſe. The ceremonies of the law, tho agreeable to that œconomy, were very burdenſom: but that burden is taken off from us; and therefore, comparatively ſpeaking, on that account, under the chriſtian œconomy, the divine commands are not grievous; ſeeing, under this diſpenſation, God hath been pleaſed to give us but few ordinances and inſtitutions, and the greateſt part of our duty conſiſts in the performance of moral precepts. But then,

2. Abſolutely ſpeaking, *the commands of God are not grievous* in themſelves: that is, they are not grievous to thoſe who have a right apprehenſion of them; who are in a proper temper of mind to conſider their nature and intention. They are grievous indeed to many; but then it is not becauſe of any fault in the divine commands, but in the perſons themſelves who refuſe obedience to them. If a man have his ſhoulder put out of joint, a ſmall thing may appear very burdenſome to him; which would not be ſo,

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in caſe the bone was in its proper place. So while men are in a ſtate of ſin and corruption, abandoned to vice and folly; while they are yet unregenerate, their minds are ſo diſordered, that the commands of God are burdenſome to them. But they are not ſo in themſelves: they are not ſo to them who reaſon rightly about things. In their view there is nothing in the divine law but what is ſpiritual, holy, juſt, and good; nothing but what is adapted to the various circumſtances and conditions of life; nothing but what is ſuited to the relation we bear to God and to men, to ſocieties and to particular perſons, and the regard we ought to have to ourſelves: for the law of God is ſo far from being grievous, or prejudicial to our private intereſts, that it obliges us to take the beſt and moſt diligent care both of our ſouls and bodies.

So that conſider God's commands in themſelves, and there is nothing more reaſonable. And this, if there were time, might be made appear to you in various inſtances. Can any thing be more reaſonable and juſt, than that we ſhould ſerve the God who made us; and reſign ourſelves to the providence of him who is infinitely wiſe, gracious and merciful? Is there any thing more reaſonable than that we ſhould rather expoſe ourſelves to ſuffering than to ſin, and *obey God rather than men?* Is it not fit that we ſhould *ſerve*, and *worſhip him alone who is the only true God*;

and that we ſhould worſhip him in the manner he hath preſcribed? Is it not fit that we ſhould behave ourſelves with humility, who are ſuch poor inconſiderable creatures? Is it not reaſonable that we ſhould be meek, and that we ſhould govern our paſſions with moderation? Is it not reaſonable that we ſhould carry it with great tenderneſs and compaſſion towards thoſe who are in diſtreſs and miſery, and *do to others as we would have others do to us?* Is it not fit that theſe bodies of ours ſhould be ſo governed as to be rendred ſerviceable to our more noble part, our ſouls? Is it not fit that the faculties of our minds ſhould be employed about thoſe things whereby God may be glorified, and our own true intereſt advanced; and likewiſe the common intereſt of mankind? Is it not fit that we ſhould beſtow our love upon thoſe things which are truly amiable in themſelves? Is it not fit that we ſhould believe him, who *is truth itſelf?* Is it not fit that we ſhould follow his dictates, who preſcribes nothing but what is proper, and convenient for us to ſubmit to?

What is there therefore in the commands of God that appears grievous to us? If becauſe of ſome circumſtances they ſeem to be ſo; becauſe of the reluctancy of our corrupt natures to them, becauſe in our obedience to them we may be expoſed to various afflictions and perſecutions; yet, I ſay, it does not appear that the commands of God

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are really rendred grievous, by theſe things: for God has taken ſufficient care to fortify us againſt theſe evils; and to make us acknowledge, that *his yoke is eaſy, and his burden is light* [r]. For if we ſuffer for our obedience to the commands of God, he hath promiſed to ſupport us under thoſe ſufferings; and to reward us not only with communion and fellowſhip with him while we are here, but with eternal life hereafter. A reward which ſo greatly exceeds all the ſufferings which can poſſibly attend our obedience to the commands of God, that it may be well ſaid of them that they are but *light, and for a moment*; *and not worthy to be compared with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory which God hath promiſed us* [s]. If we find a reluctancy in nature; if tho *the ſpirit be willing, the fleſh is weak*; he hath promiſed us the advantages of his free ſpirit: *Ask, and you ſhall have* [t]. He will conſolate our ſouls *with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory* [u]. We ſhall have, in the time of our obedience, the aſſiſtance and the comforts of God's free Spirit, to help us thro' all our difficulties; *the joy of a good conſcience*, and that *peace of God which paſſes all underſtanding* [v]. And if there be difficulty in religion, it is commonly at firſt: and this will appear leſs and leſs ſtill, as we go on and make a pro-

[r] Mat. 11. 30.
[s] 2 Cor. 4. 17.
[t] John 14. 13——16.
[u] 1 Pet. 1. 8.
[v] Phil. 4. 7.

greſs. The more we deny ourſelves, the more eaſy it will be; and we ſhall have the greater joy. And therefore if we have communion with God at preſent, and the proſpect of everlaſting happineſs; if we have experience of his aſſiſtance and comfort in our preſent difficulties, and aſſurance in his promiſes that he will aſſiſt and ſupport us in all our future trials and afflictions; it may well be ſaid that *his commandments are not grievous.*

But to conclude. As *this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous*; it behoves us to examine ourſelves upon this topick, whether we love God, and keep his commandments, or not? Do we keep them? Do we make it the buſineſs of our lives, and is it our pleaſure, to do that which is agreeable to him? Do we *delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man* [w]? Do we ſtudy what is *his good, and acceptable, and perfect will* [x]? Have we a tenderneſs of conſcience, that we will not do what may probably offend him, tho we are not certain of it? Do we delight in reading his law, in *meditating upon it*; and make it the rule of our lives? If we love God, certainly it appears by our keeping his commandments. Some indeed are ready to ſuſpect themſelves that they do

[w] Rom. 7. 22. | [x] *Chap.* 12. 2.

not

not love God; becauſe they know it is their duty to perform the divine commands, but in many inſtances they fail in it. But what is the ſettled reſolution of your mind; what is it you moſt aſpire after? Is it your trouble, that you do not keep the commandments of God as you ought to do? Do you ſeriouſly mourn over the violation of his law, when you are ſurprized into ſin? Your love appears in this ſorrow, and this trouble: for thoſe who mourn over their non-conformity to the divine law, *love the law of the Lord*, and *delight in it after the inner man* [y]; provided this be a ſerious ſorrow, and a true repentance. Are you therefore uneaſy that you love the law of God no more? Are you aſhamed of your follies, and ſinful inadvertencies? Do you make it the buſineſs of your lives to reform; and do you deſire nothing more ardently than this: and is it your greateſt ſolicitude that you may be holy, as well as happy? Do you love communion with God, that it may bring you into a conformity to him; that you may know him better, and love him more? Do you value his ordinances for this end? Then it is a ſign you love God. But whatever enjoyments you profeſs to have, or whatſoever eaſe in your own minds on the account of the orthodoxy of your principles, and the goodneſs of your faith; if that faith hath

[y] Rom. 7. 22.

not wrought by this love which appears in keeping the commandments of God, it is not genuine. And from henceforth, ſeeing *the commandments of God are not grievous*, as you find they are not, when compared with the yoke of ſin and Satan; ſeeing they are not grievous to a good man, but, notwithſtanding there is ſome remaining reluctancy, yet he is enabled by the grace of God to overcome it; and ſeeing they are not grievous when we conſider them in themſelves, and according to the rule of right reaſon: how inexcuſable is the folly of thoſe who will not ſubmit themſelves to the divine commands? How inexcuſable will theſe be at the laſt judgment; when all ſhall acknowledge this truth, that the divine *commands are not grievous?* How inexcuſable ſhall they be, who pretend Chriſt was an auſtere maſter; when it will evidently appear to the contrary? How great will be their ſhame and confuſion, as well as their pain and miſery? And what encouragement ſhould this be to us all to give up ourſelves intirely to God; and to ſhew our love to him by keeping of his commandments? Many are for defering the buſineſs of religion, becauſe they imagine it to be troubleſome and difficult: tho they would be glad to eſcape the wrath of God, and be intitled to his favour; yet they would ſtay a little longer, before they would enter upon this difficult taſk. Let ſuch conſider what hath been

been ſaid upon this account, and be engaged, without delay, to enter upon the buſineſs of religion: and they will find, that as *in keeping the commandments of God there is great reward* [z]; ſo *all his ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all his paths are paths of peace* [a].

[z] Pſal. 19. 11. | [a] Prov. 3. 17.

SERMON V.

The righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees conſidered.

Preach'd at

PINNERS-HALL, April 28, 1705.

MATT. V. 20.

For I ſay unto you, That except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

WE have two diſcourſes of our bleſſed Saviour given us more largely than any other in the ſacred writings. The one was this ſermon pronounced upon the mount; recorded in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of this goſpel by Matthew. The

The other was a diſcourſe which our Lord entertained his diſciples with a little before his ſufferings; contained in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of the goſpel of John. You may well ſuppoſe he at other times preached to the ſame purpoſe, and perhaps was as large in his diſcourſes: but the matter contained in theſe two ſermons, is eſpecially preſerved to us by the penmen of the goſpel; and ſo ordered by the Spirit of God, who brought theſe truths to their remembrance, becauſe they were of moſt ſpecial concern unto the church of God in all ages. The diſcourſe, of which our text is a part, ſeems to have been delivered preſently after our Saviour's baptiſm, and entrance upon his publick miniſtry; as the other was delivered a little before he laid down his life upon the croſs. This, it ſeems, was to initiate men in the chriſtian religion, and to ſhew what great obligations were upon them who would become his diſciples; as the other was to confirm them when they had engaged themſelves in the profeſſion of chriſtianity, and had taken the yoke of Chriſt upon them. This ſermon was preached ſoon after the baptiſm of our Lord, and ſeems to be eſpecially deſigned to deliver the people from their evil prejudices; to recover them from thoſe errors into which they had fallen by means of the falſe gloſſes of the Phariſees upon the law of God; and the degeneracy of the age that rendred the people

people diſpoſed to receive ſuch looſe kind of morals, and ſuch traditions and ſuperſtitious practices as had no foundation in the divine law, but were contrary to it. As this diſcourſe therefore conſiſted of an explication of the law; ſo the other ſermon, which our Saviour pronounced a little before his ſufferings, contained an explication of the promiſes of the goſpel with reference to the miſſion of the Spirit, and the great things which ſhould be performed by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by his followers; of the glory of his ſecond coming, and of his kingdom.

As for this ſermon of which our text is a part, I ſhall only obſerve to you, beſides what hath been ſaid already, that our Saviour had begun it in pronouncing various bleſſings upon ſuch as were truly pious, whoſe minds were adorned with chriſtian virtues, and whoſe manners were agreeable thereunto. Thoſe who were *poor in ſpirit*, who were *meek*, who *hungred and thirſted after righteouſneſs*, who were *merciful*, who were *pure in heart*, who were *peace-makers*, and who *ſuffered for righteouſneſs-ſake* [b]; thoſe who were truly religious and virtuous, whatever it coſt them, were the perſons on whom our Saviour pronounced the bleſſing. And certainly theſe bleſſings were a very proper introduction to his miniſtry; ſeeing

[b] Mat. 5. 3——10.

it

it was his great work, the work on which he came into the world, to bleſs men. *God ſent his Son Jeſus to bleſs us, by turning away every one of us from our iniquities* [c]. But it was not enough for our Saviour to ſhew that thoſe who were truly religious ſhould be truly bleſſed: but becauſe men had falſe notions about religion, and made a multitude of miſtakes concerning it, many fanſying themſelves truly religious, and intitled to thoſe bleſſings, when they had no juſt grounds to form ſuch concluſions in their own favour; therefore our Saviour explained the law of God, the moral law, and ſhewed the great obligations by which men are engaged to obedience and holineſs: ſignifying, that without ſuch a conformity to the divine law, there was no room for them to expect the bleſſings he had pronounced. And there was ſo much the more reaſon for our Lord to inſiſt ſtrictly upon this matter, becauſe of the obſcurity which was caſt on God's holy law thro' the ſad degeneracy of the Jewiſh church, and the fraud of their chief leaders; who pretending to teach the ignorant people knowledge, prov'd in reality but *blind leaders of the blind* [d]. For the Scribes and Phariſees, who were great pretenders to religion, had made ſuch interpretations of the law in favour of their own hypocriſy, as might perſuade the people they

[c] Acts 3. 26. | [d] Mat. 15. 14.

were in a certain way to happineſs; when, notwithſtanding all their great boaſts and pretences to piety and holineſs, they were but as *painted ſepulchres* [c], as our Lord takes occaſion elſewhere to tell them: they were outwardly gay and pompous, but inwardly full of filth and rottenneſs. He therefore ſhews what it is the law of God requires; and how ſincere, and ſtrict, and circumſpect men ought to be, if they will, in good earneſt, aſpire after true holineſs. It is true, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt does, in his diſcourſes, abundantly ſhew, by his ſtrict interpretation given of the law, that men have need of another righteouſneſs than their own, for their juſtification in the ſight of God. But he alſo ſhews, and that is indeed his main deſign in this chapter, that men are under the ſtricteſt obligations to holineſs and purity, if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven. And he had, in the 16th verſe of this chapter declared, that thoſe who would be his diſciples muſt not only be ſecretly religious, but muſt diffuſe their light in the world, and ſpread it abroad by a holy converſation: *Let your light*, ſays he, *ſo ſhine before men, that they ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.* Becauſe our Lord came to ſet up a new religion in the world, came as an extraordinary prophet, and inſtructed the

[c] Mat. 23. 27.

people

people in a more excellent manner than the Scribes and Phariſees; they, it ſeems, inſinuated that he came to make void the moral law. Now this had been ſo far from advancing our Saviour's reputation, if it had been true, that it would have anſwered indeed the deſigns of the Phariſees, and effectually prejudiced the minds of the people againſt him. It had prejudiced all reaſonable perſons againſt his doctrine, if he had really come to diſſolve the obligation men owe to the moral law: for this would have been to overthrow holineſs at once. But our Lord ſufficiently vindicates himſelf from this imputation. *Think not*, ſays he, *that I am come to deſtroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil* [f]: I am come to keep the law of God; to obey it, and not to deſtroy it. *For verily I ſay unto you, Till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled* [g]. *Not one jot or tittle:* a *jod* is the leaſt letter, and a *tittle* the leaſt vowel in the Hebrew language. And thus our Saviour declares, that not the leaſt point ſhould be taken from the moral law: for it is of this that he is diſcourſing; as is evident from the reſt of the chapter. *Till all be fulfilled:* that is, but all ſhall be fulfilled; it ſhall be obeyed, becauſe it remains. In the ſame form are the words of the prophet, *This iniquity ſhall not be purged from you*

[f] Mat. 5. 17. | [g] *Ver.* 18.

till

till ye die [h]: that is, they ſhall never be taken away; but ye ſhall die. So here; *Till the law be fulfilled:* that is, but it ſhall be fulfilled. And as our Lord by this declares himſelf to be a zealous maintainer of the moral law; ſo he takes occaſion to warn men againſt the violation of it; declaring, that whoſoever ſhould break it, would be very culpable. *Whoſoever ſhall break the leaſt of theſe commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven: but whoſoever ſhall do and teach them, the ſame ſhall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* [i]. This ſeems, in a ſpecial manner, to reflect upon the Scribes and Phariſees, who made void ſome of the laws of God by their own traditions; tho the words are general, and may be extended to any other, who, by their falſe interpretations and erroneous notions, go about to vacate the divine law. And then follow the words of our text: *For I ſay unto you, That except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.* q. d. "Except you take other meaſures con-
" cerning the law of God than they have
" done, unleſs you underſtand the divine
" law in a different manner than they have
" explain'd it, and obey it at another man-
" ner of rate than they have preſcribed;

[h] Iſa. 22. 14. | [i] Mat. 5. 19.

" unleſs

" unleſs you act, and unleſs you teach the " divine law after another manner, you " ſhall not enter into the kingdom of God." Here, Firſt, we may take notice of the form of our Saviour's words; and then of the matter of them.

Firſt, As to the form of them; it is obſervable that our Lord ſpeaks with ſome emphaſis, with ſome more than ordinary force, when he ſays, *For I ſay unto you.* Thus when he has ſomething of very great importance to deliver, he frequently introduces it with, *Verily I ſay unto you*; or, *Verily, verily I ſay unto you:* which is as much as to ſay, Obſerve what I ſpeak; I declare to you expreſly. So here; *I ſay unto you, unleſs a man's righteouſneſs exceed that of the Scribes and Phariſees, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* " I ſay it, " who know the truth, and am *ſent into* " *the world to bear witneſs to the truth* [k]: " I ſay it, who know what is neceſſary to " bring men to the kingdom of heaven; I, " who know all the obligations to holineſs " and purity; I, who know perfectly well " all the requirements of the moral law, " becauſe I am the author of it; I, who " am *that prophet ſent of God* [l], and know " his will intirely; *I ſay unto you, unleſs* " *your righteouſneſs exceed that of the Scribes* " *and Phariſees, you cannot enter into the* " *kingdom of God.*" There is a farther force

[k] John 18. 17.

[l] John 6. 14. Deut. 18. 15.

given

given to the words in the Greek. Our tranſlation renders it, *he ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of God; in no caſe:* in the Greek it is, *you ſhall not not* [m]. Our Lord doubles the negative, to ſhew the impoſſibility of the thing, that a man ſhould enter into the kingdom of heaven, if he had no better a righteouſneſs than that of the Scribes and Phariſees.

If therefore we conſider the perſon who ſpeaks, and the emphaſis which he puts upon his own words, and with what ſerioufneſs and ſolemnity he profeſſes the thing; it may well put us,

Secondly, Upon an inquiry into the matter of the words, the ſubſtance of this doctrine of Chriſt; what kind of righteouſneſs this was of the Scribes and Phariſees, with which alone they could not be admitted into heaven: and what righteouſneſs that muſt be which exceeds the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, without which a man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. And in order to this, I therefore propoſe, from theſe words to ſhew you,

I. What is meant by *the kingdom of heaven.*

II. What kind of perſons theſe Scribes and Phariſees were, who, it ſeems, had not a title to the kingdom of heaven.

[m] οὐ μὴ.

III. What kind of righteouſneſs that was which they had, and which would not give them admittance into the kingdom of heaven.

IV. What kind of righteouſneſs that is which is meant in the text, without which a man *cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and concerning which it is implied, that he who hath it ſhall enter into that kingdom.

V. How it appears that it is *impoſſible* for any one *to enter into the kingdom of heaven*, who hath not that righteouſneſs which our Saviour ſpeaks of; a *righteouſneſs exceeding that of the Scribes and Phariſees.*

Our Saviour ſpeaks of ſomething here that is a great advantage, a great and glorious privilege, deſired by the Scribes and Phariſees as well as others; namely, *to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* He ſuppoſes that it is neceſſary to have a certain righteouſneſs to enter into this kingdom; that theſe Scribes and Phariſees had it not: and therefore he warns others, that their righteouſneſs may exceed theirs; or elſe they will not be admitted into this glorious ſtate, deſcribed by *the kingdom of heaven.* Therefore,

I. I am to ſhew you what it is our Saviour means by *the kingdom of heaven.*

The kingdom of heaven, in the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament, is variouſly accepted: ſometimes it hath regard to the ſtate of grace, and ſometimes to the ſtate of glory.

If we interpret the words here to have relation to the ſtate of grace; the meaning muſt not be, that thoſe perſons who have not a *righteouſneſs exceeding the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*, cannot enter into a church-ſtate: for many hypocrites have entred into the church, and made a formal profeſſion, and a conſiderable appearance in the eyes of the beſt men, a great appearance of religion; many have entred into the viſible church of Chriſt, who had not that righteouſneſs which is neceſſary for admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven. If it be underſtood therefore of the ſtate of grace; the meaning muſt be, that unleſs a man's *righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*, he cannot be truly a member of the church of Chriſt; of that viſible church which is vitally united to him as the head: cannot be a true member of Chriſt's myſtical body. And this indeed is very true: to be a chriſtian in reality, to be a true diſciple of Chriſt, to be a member of his myſtical body; a man muſt have a *righteouſneſs exceeding that of the Scribes and Phariſees*.

But I rather think that *the kingdom of heaven* here relates to the ſtate of glory. Becauſe,

1. That

1. That is the proper ſignification of *the kingdom of heaven:* and the proper ſignification of words ought always to be taken, where there is nothing to determine us another way. The goſpel church-ſtate is called *the kingdom of heaven*; becauſe it may be compared to the ſtate of glory, grace being the beginning of glory, and thoſe who are the members of Chriſt's church in a ſtate of grace, having a title to glory; and becauſe they are heavenly-minded, raiſed above this world, and the things and the inhabitants thereof, in regard of the purity of their affections, and in regard of their heavenly deſires. They are raiſed above the things of this world, becauſe they deſpiſe and contemn carnal things; having higher and nobler objects to entertain their minds, and after which they earneſtly aſpire. But ſeeing the moſt natural and proper ſenſe of *the kingdom of heaven* is the ſtate of glory; and ſeeing it is certainly true, that they who have not a *righteouſneſs exceeding that of the Scribes and Phariſees, cannot enter into the ſtate of glory*; and if they cannot be true members of Chriſt in a ſtate of grace, by a much ſtronger reaſon they cannot be inhabitants of the kingdom of glory: therefore this ſenſe I count preferable to the other.

2. Our Saviour had been ſpeaking of the ſtate of glory in the ſame terms before: and therefore we muſt take the expreſſion in

the ſame ſenſe here, unleſs there be ſome obvious reaſon to determine the contrary. Among the bleſſings and rewards he pronounces in the beginning of the chapter, he ſays, in the 3d verſe, *bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*; and in the 10th verſe, *bleſſed are they who are perſecuted for righteouſneſs-ſake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*; and this he explains in the 12th verſe; *rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* From theſe places, I think, it is ſufficiently plain, that our Lord is here ſpeaking of the ſtate of glory: and therefore we have reaſon to underſtand his words in our text in the ſame ſenſe. Beſides,

3. This phraſe, of *the kingdom of heaven*, or *the kingdom of God*, is moſt frequently uſed to this purpoſe in the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament. As in Mat. 7. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven.* So in Mat. 19. 23. our Lord ſhews, *how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* By which ſeems to be ſignified the ſtate of glory: becauſe the generality of thoſe who are rich, are ſo much intangled and inſnared with the things of this world, that they mind not heavenly things after ſuch a manner as is neceſſary to the attaining of everlaſting life. So in Acts 14. 22. the apoſtles declare, that *thro' much tribulation*

we

we muſt enter into the kingdom of God: after we have ſuffered with Chriſt, we muſt reign with him. And in the ſame ſenſe our Lord evidently uſes the phraſe, when he ſays; *except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God* [n]; i. e. the kingdom of glory.

4. This ſeems to be plainly the ſenſe of our text, becauſe it is oppoſed to a ſtate of torment in hell. In the words after the text, our Saviour ſpeaks of *the danger of the judgment*, and of *the danger of the council*; and of *the danger of hell-fire* [o]. And, as by theſe expreſſions, he is evidently threatning thoſe who live in ſin with future puniſhments; ſo when, in order to encourage righteouſneſs and obedience to the law of God, he here propoſes the kingdom of heaven for a reward; it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe he intends the glorious ſtate of the ſaints hereafter. And this will be farther illuſtrated, if we compare this text with the report given by the evangeliſt Mark, concerning ſome of the ſame things which are contained in the context. You ſee what our Saviour ſays in this 5th of Matthew, *ver.* 29. *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members ſhould periſh, and not that thy whole body ſhould be caſt into hell.* Compare this with Mark 9. 47. and there you will

[n] John 3. 3. [o] *Ver.* 21, 22.

find it thus expreſſed: *If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be caſt into hell-fire.* So that here our Lord oppoſes *the kingdom of heaven* to a ſtate of torment in hell. This being therefore agreeable to the words in the context, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe he means here the ſtate of glory.

So much may ſuffice for the firſt thing, what is ſignified by *entring into the kingdom of heaven:* it is entring into that ſtate of glory in the other world, which is ſpoken of in ſcripture by ſo many elegant terms; and where *Chriſt, our fore-runner, is entred* [p].

II. We are to conſider what kind of perſons theſe *Scribes and Phariſees* were, who made ſuch a pretence to *the kingdom of heaven*; and yet, it ſeems, had no real title to it. The Scribes were certain officers among the Jews: and the Phariſees were a Sect which pretended to more than ordinary ſtrictneſs in religion.

We read of various ſorts of Scribes in the holy ſcriptures. It ſeems, by divers paſſages in the Old Teſtament, that there were ſome who might be called royal Scribes, who were great miniſters of ſtate; and, perhaps, might execute any office like to that of a ſecretary of ſtate, or the ſecretary of a prince now. And therefore in

[p] Heb. 6. 20.

ſpeaking

ſpeaking of the great officers of David's court, in 2 Sam. 8. 16, 17. this is mentioned as one of them. *And Jacob, the ſon of Zeruiah, was over the hoſt; and Jehoſhaphat, the ſon of Ahilud, was recorder; and Zadok, the ſon of Ahitub, and Abimelech, the ſon of Abiathar, were the prieſts; and Seraiah was the ſcribe.* So in 2 Kings 12. 10. *And it was ſo, when they ſaw there was much money in the cheſt, that the king's ſcribe, and the high prieſt came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the houſe of the Lord.* By which paſſages, it ſeems, the king's ſcribe was employed in the treaſury. In divers other places you may read of the ſame officer, who may be termed a royal Scribe.

We read of other ſcribes that ſeemed to have been employed in a lower ſtation in civil affairs; who uſed to write much, to make deeds and conveyances. And of ſuch the pſalmiſt ſpeaks, when he ſays, *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer* [q], or of *a ready ſcribe.* And in 1 Chron. 2. 55. we read of *the families of the ſcribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites:* by which it ſeems as if there were certain families who addicted themſelves to this employment in eſpecial manner.

[q] Pſal. 45. 1.

But farther: there were others who were religious, or eccleſiaſtical ſcribes; ſuch whoſe buſineſs it was to keep the law, to write copies of it, and to ſee that thoſe copies were very correct: many of whom made it their buſineſs to ſtudy the law of God, and to explain it to the people; and therefore were called ſometimes *doctors* or *teachers* of the law, and were in great reputation amongſt the people of the Jews upon that account. We find commonly in ſcripture, theſe *Scribes*, and the *Phariſees* are put together. And our Lord Jeſus likens his diſciples to a *ſcribe inſtructed unto the kingdom of heaven*, who is capable of *bringing forth things new and old, out of the treaſury* of his mind [r]. Now theſe ſeem to be the perſons concerned in our text, and of whom we often have an account. And ſo the words are as much as to ſay: "*except your righteouſneſs exceed the righ-* "*teouſneſs* of thoſe who pretend to be the "doctors and expoſitors of the law among "the Jews, thoſe who ſit in Moſes's chair, "and dictate to the people, and pretend to "explain the law to them; unleſs your "righteouſneſs exceed theirs, who pretend "to be ſo zealous for the law; *you cannot* "*enter into the kingdom of God.*"

The Phariſees were joined with theſe. As the Scribes were a ſort of officers; ſo the Phariſees were a particular ſect of religion.

[r] Mat. 13. 52.

They

They were Jews: but then they were *the ſtricteſt ſect of the Jews* [f]. Some of the Jews were *Sadducees*; of whom we often read in the goſpel: and ſome were *Phariſees*. And ſome make another diſtinction amongſt them; *viz.* thoſe who were called *Eſſenes*. But, in all probability, theſe were ſome of the ſtricter ſort of the Phariſees.

Their name is thought by ſome to be derived from a word which ſignifies *to enlarge*, or *lay open* [s]; becauſe they laid open or *made broad their phylacteries* [t], made a great ſhew of their keeping the law of God; or becauſe they expoſed their good works, and made a ſhew of them, were open in their profeſſion, and in the practice of thoſe things wherein they counted religion to conſiſt; for they prayed openly and publickly *in the corners of the ſtreets* [u], and *did their alms as with the ſound of a trumpet* [v]. Some derive the word from another which ſignifies to *explain, expound*, or *interpret* [w]; becauſe they pretended, many of them, to be capable of interpreting the law with great accuracy. And others derive it from a word which ſignifies *to be ſeparated* [x]; becauſe they were ſeparated from the common people, and pretended to extraordinary piety. It ſeems many of the *Scribes* were *Phariſees*; as you

[f] Acts 26. 5.
[s] פרש.
[t] Mat. 23. 5.
[u] *Chap.* 6. 5.
[v] *Ver.* 2.
[w] פרש.
[x] *From the laſt verb in the Conjug. Niph.* נפרש.

ſee

ſee in Acts 23. 7, 8, 9. *There aroſe a diſſenſion between the Phariſees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees ſay that there is no reſurrection, neither angel nor ſpirit; but the Phariſees confeſs both. And there aroſe a great cry: and the Scribes that were of the Phariſees part aroſe, and ſtrove, ſaying, we find no evil in this man; but if a ſpirit or an angel hath ſpoken to him, let us not fight againſt God. The Scribes that were of the part of the Phariſees.* There were therefore ſome Scribes who were of the ſect of the Phariſees; and ſome who had other notions, it ſeems. But the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* being ſo often put together in ſcripture, ſeems to ſignify that the Scribes, a great number of them, were of this ſect. And this ſect of the Phariſees was the ſtricteſt: as appears by the apoſtle Paul, who declared he was a Phariſee: *After the ſtraiteſt ſect of our religion, I lived a Phariſee* [y]. The Phariſees among the Jews were accounted the ſtricteſt men in regard of their lives and converſations. It might be rendred *the moſt accurate ſect* [z]; the moſt circumſpect and watchful over themſelves, and who had the greateſt applauſe among the people for their piety.

So that now you ſee who theſe perſons were, theſe *Scribes and Phariſees*, concerning whoſe *righteouſneſs* our Saviour here

[y] Acts 26. 5.

[z] κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν.

 ſpeaks.

ſpeaks. They were the doctors, the teachers, the interpreters of the law, reputed to be the beſt and moſt eminent expoſitors they had among them, and who ſeemed to walk the moſt ſtrictly and conformably to the law of God. Yet even theſe were uncapable of *entring into the kingdom of God*: and there muſt be a *righteouſneſs* greater and better than that *of the Scribes and Phariſees*, or elſe there is no admiſſion *into the kingdom of heaven.*

Having given you ſome account of them, I proceed now,

III. To ſpeak of the *righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees* more particularly. And you ſee, in the words of our text, it is ſuppoſed that their righteouſneſs made a ſpecious appearance. It is ſuppoſed that they, and the people in general, thought that ſuch a righteouſneſs as theirs would give them admittance into the kingdom of glory; or elſe there had not been need for our Saviour to ſpeak with ſuch an emphaſis in this matter, to undeceive the people about it. It is implied that their righteouſneſs was a very ſpecious thing in the eyes of the people: and it is certain they had a great value for it, counting themſelves very righteous. On the other hand, our Lord expreſly declares that it is a very inſufficient righteouſneſs; and that a man may fall ſhort of eternal bliſs, and muſt fall ſhort

of

of it, if his righteouſneſs be no better than theirs. It will be neceſſary therefore to conſider, firſt, the fairer ſide of their righteouſneſs; to ſhew you what a ſpecious appearance it made: and then, on the other ſide, to treat of its inſufficiency; and to ſhew you the great flaws and defects which were to be found in it.

1. We are to diſcourſe of the ſpecious appearance of this righteouſneſs. And you will eaſily allow that it did make a fair ſhew, when the apoſtle, who was a Phariſee, ſays of himſelf, *that, touching the righteouſneſs which is in the law, he was blameleſs* [a]: that is, according to the interpretations then taken up concerning the law. He looked upon himſelf, as the young man in the goſpel did, as one capable of fulfilling the law of God: *All theſe things*, ſays he, *have I done from my youth up; what lack I yet* [b]? wherein do I fall ſhort of the perfection of the law? You ſee, by this, what a mighty appearance their practice and profeſſion made among the people. But let us look into it more particularly.

You have heard, that in general, the Phariſees were the moſt religious ſect among the Jews: and if you take notice of their practice in regard to themſelves, to other men, and to God; you will find there was a great appearance of religion amongſt them.

[a] Phil. 3. 6. | [b] Mat. 19. 20.

In regard to themſelves: they were perſons who appeared to be very abſtemious, and temperate; nay, they addicted themſelves ſo to abſtinence, that they *faſted* very *frequently* [c]. And they not only addicted themſelves to faſting; but, if we may believe ſome hiſtorians, ſome of them did mortify themſelves after a very ſtrange manner, by putting thorns in their clothes, and in their beds, that they might ſleep the leſs, and attend to their devotion the more; that they denied themſelves many things innocent in themſelves, for the ſake of mortification, and ſeemed to have little regard to this world and the things of it, as being in the purſuit of ſomething greater and better, even *the kingdom of heaven.* They were ſtrictly abſtinent, even to a fault; and did more, in this reſpect, than was required of them by the divine law. Here was a ſpecious appearance of ſelf-denial: and you may know, by what the *Phariſee* is repreſented to ſay when he comes to the temple to pray with the *publican*, that he *is not an extortioner, unjuſt, or an adulterer*; that he is not *as the publican* [d]; that they profeſſed an abhorrence of immoralities, and to live very ſtrictly, purely, and abſtemiouſly.

In regard of others: it ſeems *they gave alms*; and gave conſiderably. They publiſhed what they did of this kind as with

[c] Luke 5. 33. [d] *Chap.* 18. 11.

the

the ſound of a trumpet. It is true, their oſtentation was a fault: but this makes it probable they gave abundance of alms among the people. And they had not only a regard to the bodies of men, but would ſeem to have a ſpecial reſpect to their ſouls too: for our Saviour declares, *they compaſſed ſea and land to make a proſelyte* [e]. Thus they appeared zealous, in regard of the ſouls of others, to bring them to the knowledge of the true religion. They would leave no ſtone unturn'd to gain a proſelyte to their religion; which was, at that time, the beſt in the world.

Then, as to their devotion and piety towards God, it ſeemed very great: for they did not content themſelves with praying in the temple; but, as if religion was ſtill uppermoſt in their minds, and as if their zeal was ſo great that they could not contain themſelves, even in the moſt publick places, they *prayed at the corners of the ſtreets* [f]; as if they could not be *weary of well-doing*. And as their prayers were very frequent; ſo they were often very *long* [g]. And, for the ſupport of the publick worſhip, they *paid tithes*, even of *mint*, *aniſe*, *and cummin* [h]. Abundance of devotion therefore appeared in their behaviour and conduct. Nor did they only appear zealots for the worſhip of God; but they had amongſt

[e] Mat. 23. 15.
[f] *Chap.* 6. 5.
[g] Mat. 23. 14.
[h] *Chap.* 23. 23.

them

them the great and main doctrines of religion, and ſome of the moſt affecting motives to induce men to holineſs: for, as they pretended to little in this life, and denied themſelves upon ſeveral accounts; ſo they informed the people that there were rewards to be expected in the world to come. They deterred men from ſin, by ſpeaking of future puniſhments; and encouraged men to holineſs, by ſetting before them the rewards of the kingdom of heaven. The Sadducees, indeed, were a ſect licentious in their doctrine; pretending that the promiſes of God had regard to this world only, and not to the world to come; denying the doctrine of the reſurrection; denying that there were either angels, or ſpirits; denying the immortality of the ſoul, and the reſurrection of the body. But the Phariſees held all theſe truths: and theſe muſt be acknowledged to be moſt excellent motives to promote religion in the world.

So that if you look upon their behaviour with reſpect to themſelves, or their carriage towards others, or their zeal towards God, or the purity of the doctrine they maintained againſt other of their countrymen, and the great ſkill they had in the law of God; they appear to have made a very ſpecious ſhew of religion. But, notwithſtanding this, our Saviour aſſures us, that *unleſs* our *righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs* of theſe men, *we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Tho

Tho they were ſo abſtinent, and appeared ſo circumſpect; tho they ſeemed ſo afraid of defilement, that when they had converſed with others in the market-place they would waſh themſelves, to ſignify how deſirous they were to *keep unſpotted from the world* [i]; notwithſtanding that they avoided to keep company with publicans and ſinners, thoſe who were openly profane and immoral, as appears by their reproving our Saviour for ſo doing, who did it only to reform them; notwithſtanding they had ſo much appearance of reſpect to the ſouls and bodies of men, and ſo much ſeeming delight in acts of piety; notwithſtanding they had ſuch zeal for God, and for his worſhip, as appears by the length of their prayers, and taking all occaſions to worſhip: notwithſtanding all this, their righteouſneſs was ſtrangely inſufficient and defective. Which leads us now,

2. To take a view of the dark ſide of the matter, and ſee what were the great faults and blemiſhes which were to be found in *the righteouſneſs of theſe men.* Now,

(1.) Their righteouſneſs was very partial. They ſeemed indeed zealous on ſome accounts, and to have devotion and piety, and charity, to be abſtinent, and to avoid various ſins: but they were partial in the law of God, as the prophet complains of thoſe of old [k]; they were zealous for certain things,

[i] Mat. 15. 2. *Chap.* 9. 11. | [k] Mal. 2. 9.

but

but had no regard to others. They *made long prayers* [l]: but they *devoured widows houſes* [m]. They were very charitable towards ſome: but they were very covetous, it ſeems, towards others. They ſeemed mighty zealous for the ſouls of men; they would not ſpare any charge and pains to make a proſelyte to their religion: and yet they were cruel to the ſouls of men, in endeavouring to divert them from the doctrine of Chriſt, who preached more purely and ſpiritually than they. They were zealous for the worſhip of God; as appears by ſome inſtances: but if Chriſt would inform them of any duty, or any act of worſhip which was not in their ſcheme of religion, they would not regard him. They were for maintaining the doctrine of the reſurrection, and the immortality of the ſoul; future rewards and puniſhments: but if the way to heaven was opened by a purer method than theirs, they would *neither enter themſelves, nor ſuffer others to enter thereinto* [n]. They would reject our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and endeavour to make others do ſo too. Before he was crucified, they had no regard to the doctrine he preached concerning his death and reſurrection: no more had they afterwards, ſuch of them as remained unconverted. And thus, as they *made void the law* [o], in certain inſtances, tho they ſeemed

[l] Mat. 23. 3.
[m] Luke 20. 47.
[n] Mat. 23. 13.
[o] *Chap.* 15. 6.

ſo ſtrict and zealous for it upon other accounts; ſo they intirely rejected the goſpel. Now it is certainly a great duty, if we will be religious indeed, to have reſpect unto the whole will of God, as near as we can; to ſeek after his mind in every inſtance; not only to be zealous, and juſt, and charitable in ſome particular inſtances, but thro' the whole courſe of our converſations. If a man is unjuſt, and covetous; what does it ſignify, that upon ſome occaſions, he is liberal and charitable? If a man ſeem zealous to gain a proſelyte, and yet is maliciouſly bent againſt thoſe who are ſtricter in piety than himſelf; how partial is he in the inſtances wherein he ought to manifeſt his charity? And ſo if a man pay ever ſo much ſeeming regard to the mind of God, delivered by his ſervant Moſes; how partial is he, who, at the ſame time, rejects the miniſtry of his Son?

(2.) They were ſuperficial in their righteouſneſs, as well as partial. As they had not reſpect unto all God's commandments; ſo the regard they had to his law, was rather in ſome external obſervances, than in thoſe which were more difficult; *i. e.* the more ſpiritual part. The law of God extends itſelf to the heart and deſires of a man; to his thoughts, as well as his words and actions. That law which forbids murder, not only forbids us to kill our neighbour, but forbids us to ſpeak angrily to him without

without a cauſe. That precept which forbids adultery, forbids all impure deſires: ſo holy and ſpiritual is the law of God; as appears by our Saviour's interpretation in this chapter. But they were ſuperficial in their performances: and interpreted the law after ſuch a manner, as to perſuade the people that if they abſtained from groſs and outward immoralities, they were very righteous; tho *ſeven abominations were in their hearts* [p]. Now God looks at the heart, to ſee what is in the mind; and in a ſpecial manner takes notice of this: for it is the heart that is the root of all ſin. *For, out of the heart,* ſays our Saviour, *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe witneſſes, and blaſphemies: and theſe are the things which defile a man* [q].

And then it appears, farther, that they were ſuperficial in their obſervance of the law, not only becauſe they made ſo ſcanty an interpretation of the moral law, but becauſe they ſeemed to lay ſo much ſtreſs upon their own performances: and this not only upon the ceremonies of the law, but upon their own traditions; nay, they even *made void the law of God,* to make room for theſe traditions. This was a ſuperficial ſort of religion indeed, this of the Phariſees; in that they took off the mind from the main things which belonged to the law of God,

[p] Prov. 26. 25.

[q] Mat. 15. 19, 20.

that they might reconcile it to their manner of life. They laid ſo mighty a ſtreſs upon their own traditions, that a man was eſteemed very criminal if he ate with unwaſhen hands: he tranſgreſſed the traditions of the elders. This was a great crime: and yet they could indulge themſelves in the breach of the divine law in many inſtances; as you may ſee in reading this chapter. They counted a man was ſafe enough if he did not kill another; tho he injured his reputation, and gave way to indecent paſſions, and uncomely ſpeeches. They pretended that a man, if he did but love his neighbour, might hate his enemy: not conſidering that our enemies are our neighbours, and that we are to love them; as our Saviour ſignifies by the parable of the good Samaritan [r], and in other expreſs words to that purpoſe. They pretended that a man might ſwear as he pleaſed, ſo he performed his oaths: whereas our Saviour tells us there muſt be no profane ſwearing, or taking the name of God in our mouths, and that there muſt be no ſwearing by any other name than that of God himſelf, and that after a ſolemn manner; an oath ſignifying an appeal to the ſearcher of hearts; and, ſeeing God only can ſearch the heart, his name only is to be invoked in a ſolemn oath. Not only did they do this, and ſo clip off a great part of what the law preſcribed;

[r] Luke 10.

but they ſet up their own traditions in the room of the law of God.

But farther: that the Phariſees were ſuperficial in their righteouſneſs, appears, in that thoſe leſſer things, which the law did really require, were practiſed by them, but the greater things were neglected. They *tithed mint, aniſe, and cummin* [r], to ſhew their zeal for their ſupport of the miniſtry, according to the word of God; and, conſequently for the ſupport of his worſhip: but then, as our Lord moſt juſtly reproaches them, they *neglected judgment, mercy, and faith*, which were of much greater conſequence. Thoſe little things, of *tithing mint, aniſe, and cummin, ought not to have been neglected* by them: but *judgment, mercy, and faith*, ought to have been minded by them in a more ſpecial manner. So that they were ſuperficial in their righteouſneſs.

(3.) They were hypocritical: and this was a dreadful blemiſh upon them. Our Saviour pronounced woe upon them on this account: and, for the ſame reaſon, John the baptiſt rejected them from his baptiſm; becauſe they did not *bring forth fruits meet for repentance* [s]. They made a great pretence to religion; but, it ſeems, there was abundance of diſſimulation amongſt them, generally ſpeaking. I do not ſpeak of every individual Phariſee; but, it ſeems, the ge-

[r] Mat. 23. 23. [s] *Chap.* 3. 8.

nerality of them, in the ſcripture, had this character. I believe the apoſtle Paul, before his converſion, when he was a Phariſee, was not an hypocrite. He himſelf declared, before the high prieſt, that he *had exerciſed himſelf to walk in all good conſcience till that day* [t]: and when he acknowledges the guilt of having been *a blaſphemer, a perſecutor, and injurious*; he ſays it was *thro' ignorance that* he *did it, and unbelief* [u]. But our Saviour juſtly reproaches theſe Phariſees of hypocriſy: who made ſuch great pretenſions to piety themſelves, and ſo unjuſtly accuſed him: who, while they pretended to give abundance of alms, yet were ſuch great diſſemblers, that their deſign was to prey upon poor widows: when *they prayed*, it was *that they might be ſeen of men*; and, when *they gave alms*, it was for the ſame end: therefore *they had their reward.* They did not do theſe things becauſe they loved God, or his worſhip; but that they might have applauſe amongſt men: therefore they gave their alms in the moſt publick manner. They were hypocrites, becauſe they would magnify the faults of others; and, at the ſame time, would not *pluck the beam out of their own eyes*, when they ſeemed ſo *offended at the mote in the eyes* of others. This was a great evil indeed, that tho there was ſuch a ſhew of religion, there ſhould be ſo great

[t] Acts 23. 1. | [u] 1 Tim. 1. 13.

hypocriſy

hypocriſy amongſt them: which is a vice abhorred both by God and man.

(4.) Another great blemiſh upon them was, that in their exerciſe of religion, and the good works which they did, they were vain-boaſters: and this took off the glory even of all the good works which they did, becauſe they prided themſelves in their performances; inſtead of acknowledging, as Chriſt teaches, that *they were unprofitable ſervants*, and that *they did no more than they ought to do* [v]. They gloried in their own righteouſneſs; and had the confidence, not only to *juſtify themſelves before men* [w], but even before *God* [x]: as if they would vindicate themſelves from all evil. Now pride is hateful in the ſight of God; and ſeems to be one of the greateſt vices, a fundamental evil. It was the occaſion of the fall of our firſt parents: and it ſeems to have been the ruin of the angels that fell; *who kept not their firſt eſtate* [y], but aſpired to ſomething they had not, to ſome ſtation which God had not allotted to them. The greateſt indication of their ſin that is given us in the holy ſcripture, ſeems to be this of pride; in that they *kept not their firſt ſtate*. This muſt be a mighty defect; becauſe our Lord ſhews, elſewhere, how impoſſible it is for a man to enter into his kingdom if he be not meek and humble, and does not

[v] Luke 17. 10.
[w] *Chap.* 16. 15.
[x] Luke 18. 11.
[y] Jude 6.

behave himſelf *like a little child* [z]. For, a man to do any good act, and then to boaſt of it before men, and eſpecially before God, when he hath not done ſo much as his duty; to have vain-glorious thoughts concerning himſelf, and to ſwell with pride and vanity, as if the Almighty were beholden to him, and as if he were free from ſin; this is a moſt high affront to the majeſty of God, and ſhews a profound ignorance of the evil of ſin, and of a man's own ſhare in that evil.

Now theſe things ſhew, that *the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*, whatever pretence they made, was but very ſmall and inconſiderable, and unworthy to be accepted of God. For tho divers things they did were materially good, and they made a pompous ſhew of them; yet there was ſo much partiality in their regards to the law of God, and ſo many ſuperſtitions in advancing their own traditions before it; their righteouſneſs was ſo ſuperficial, and conſiſted ſo much in the exerciſe of leſſer rather than greater duties; there was ſo much hypocriſy, which is ſo odious in the ſight of God; and ſo much pride, and vain-glory attending what they did; that our Saviour might well ſay, *Unleſs your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Methinks it is eaſy for every one to ſee, that the cha-

[z] Mat. 18. 4.

racter

racter of their righteouſneſs, if it be ſuch as hath been ſhewn you, could, by no means, give them admittance into the kingdom of heaven. Pride, the very ſin which caſt the angels from heaven, would effectually prevent theſe people's entring into it. Hypocriſy before God, who is *the ſearcher of the heart, and the trier of the reins* [a]; a partial regard to God's law, which is ſo *pure and holy*; and a ſuperficial regard to that which reaches the very ſoul, and regards our thoughts and words, as well as actions, muſt be very far from entitling them to glory, when God looks upon the heart as the main thing. I need not inſiſt farther on their character, to ſhew you that it is the moſt reaſonable thing in the world to conclude with our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in this ſentence he gives; that ſuch a righteouſneſs could not give them admittance into heaven.

What I have ſtill before me, is to ſhew you what kind of righteouſneſs that is which our Saviour here intends, when he ſpeaks of a *righteouſneſs exceeding the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees:* which is but a general and indefinite character of it. But it is neceſſary for us to conſider, not only that it muſt be a righteouſneſs greater than theirs, but to give a particular account of the characters of this righteouſneſs; what a kind of righteouſneſs it is, which, if a man hath, he ſhall *enter into the kingdom of God.*

[a] Rev. 2. 23.

For

For our Lord intimates, that whereas the righteouſneſs of the Phariſees would not introduce them into the kingdom of heaven; there is a righteouſneſs, which, when men have, it will make them meet for the kingdom of heaven. But the time being gone, I ſhall leave theſe things to another opportunity: and conclude, for the preſent, by making two or three reflections upon what hath been ſaid. And,

1. We may here take notice, that as *the kingdom of heaven* ſignifies a ſtate of glory; the true religion is the moſt excellent, in regard of its motives and rewards. What were the things the heathens propoſed to themſelves? As their fancies were without ground; ſo the future enjoyments they promiſed themſelves, were ſuited to their carnal appetites: ſuch were the pleaſures of the Elyſian fields, the pleaſures of a place or ſtate agreeable to the ſenſual deſires of men in this world. And as preſent enjoyments, which excite the carnal appetite, will certainly more eaſily engage the minds of men than thoſe motives which are taken from the ſame deſires, in their reference to another world; ſo, if in their opinion nothing but carnal pleaſure or the ſatisfaction of the ſenſual appetite is to be had in another world, then it is no wonder that men will pleaſe their ſenſes in this. For, ſince they can enjoy the ſame objects of ſenſe in this world, they

will rather have theſe enjoyments now, than defer the gratification of their deſires to a future ſtate, in which they are only to expect a happineſs of the ſame kind.

The ſame may be ſaid of the Mahometan religion; which is calculated to pleaſe and gratify the luſts and carnal appetites of men, and not to promote true virtue and piety. But how excellent is the true religion, in that it propoſes ſo noble and excellent a reward, even a kingdom? *Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleaſure to give you the kingdom* [b]: the kingdom of heaven. It is a ſpiritual and glorious kingdom: ſubſtantial happineſs indeed! to ſit down in the kingdom of God as *heirs of glory, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jeſus Chriſt*; to enjoy that bleſſedneſs which is paſt the expreſſion of man, as it is paſt his conception; *which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive* how great it is [c]. —It is this our Lord propoſes for our encouragement; a heavenly ſtate, a ſtate of glory and purity; a ſtate becoming ſo great a perſon to propoſe, as it is becoming the merit, and worth the glorious ſacrifice of Chriſt to purchaſe.

And if the motives of our holy religion are ſo great; how ſhould we exceed others, in the diſcharge of the duties of it, who have no ſuch motives ſet before them? Is

[b] Luke 12. 32. [c] 1 Cor. 2. 9.

it

it not a ſhame that thoſe who profeſs Chriſtianity are not ſtrict in holineſs and piety, when they have ſuch a glorious reward propoſed to them for their encouragement? Is it not a ſhame if they abandon religion, when they have ſo much reaſon to abandon all things elſe for the ſake of it; and *not to account the ſufferings of this preſent life worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be enjoyed hereafter* [d]? Shall we think any thing too much to do or ſuffer, provided we may, at laſt, *enter into the kingdom of heaven?*

As the glorious reward propoſed, ſhews the excellency of our holy religion; ſo it ſhews the ignorance, the folly, and vanity of thoſe who poſtpone the kingdom of heaven to temporal advantages: who had rather *enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon* [e], than a ſtate of everlaſting glory. As it ſhews the excellency of religion, that it propoſes ſuch rewards; ſo thoſe men proclaim their folly, who deſpiſe it: and they may be ſure great will be their condemnation, who would not hearken to ſuch counſel, and be moved by ſuch motives. I may ſay, in this caſe, to them, as Naaman's ſervant ſaid to him, when he was to waſh in the river of Jordan, and would not do it: *If it were a great thing that the prophet had required you to do, would you not have done it?*

[d] Rom. 8. 18. | [e] Heb. 11. 25.

how

how much more, when he only ſays unto you, Waſh, and be clean [f] *?* If many more tribulations were to be undergone by us, than any to which we can be expoſed, and we were to do a great many more duties than our holy religion enjoins; if there were greater things required of us; ſhould we not be willing to do them for *the kingdom of heaven?* How much more, when *Chriſt's yoke is* ſo *eaſy, and his burden* ſo *light* [g]; when all his commands carry with them ſo much pleaſure and delight here, and are attended with ſuch a reward hereafter, even an *eternal weight of glory* [h] *?*

2. We may infer from theſe words of our Saviour, that it is neceſſary that perſons be *righteous,* if they will *enter into the kingdom of God.* Or elſe why ſhould our Lord ſay, *Unleſs your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, you can in no caſe enter into the kingdom of God?*

This alſo vindicates the purity of the doctrine of Chriſtianity, that it connects righteouſneſs and rewards together. There is a glorious reward ſet before us: but there is no entring into heaven without righteouſneſs; and that *righteouſneſs* muſt *exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees,* or elſe we cannot enter there.

[f] 2 Kings 5. 13.
[g] Mat. 11. 30.
[h] 2 Cor. 4. 17.

3. To

3. To conclude. Let us then conſider with ourſelves, that it is not enough for us to have the name of Chriſtians, or to be eſteemed religious perſons; to *have* an external *form of godlineſs*, if we *deny the power of it* [i]. It is not enough to be found in our judgments; that we worſhip God according to the method which he preſcribes, and that we exerciſe charity towards men, towards their ſouls and bodies: but we muſt take care that our religion be all of a piece; that we ſo govern ourſelves, our hearts, and lives; that we ſo worſhip God, and carry ourſelves after ſuch a manner towards men, that our religion may not be partial, and mix'd with vain traditions and ſuperſtitions. And, in a ſpecial manner, muſt we have a care of hypocriſy and vain-glory: for God *requires truth in the inward parts* [k], ſincerity in our hearts, and deep humility; without which we cannot be the true diſciples of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, nor enter into his kingdom. Let us conſider that religion is ſuch a thing, that it muſt reign in our ſouls. We muſt *be holy in all manner of converſation* [l]: we muſt be ſtrict and circumſpect; and *then ſhall we not be aſhamed, when we have reſpect to all God's* righteous *commandments*. It is true, the beſt muſt acknowledge that they are *unprofitable ſervants* [m]. But none deſerve the name of

[i] 2 Tim. 3. 5.
[k] Pſal. 51. 6.
[l] 1 Pet. 1. 15.
[m] Luke 17. 10.

Chriſ-

Chriſtians, who are not upright and ſincere, and whoſe labour and deſire is not to be conformed to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; that they may *be perfect and complete in all the will of God* [n]. *What they know not, they will deſire to be taught: and wherein they have done evil, they will* reſolve *to do ſo no more* [o].

[n] Col. 4. 12. [o] Job 34. 32.

SER-

SERMON VI.

MATT. V. 20.

For I ſay unto you, That except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The ſecond SERMON on this text.

OUR Saviour, in this very extraordinary and moſt excellent diſcourſe, having, as I told you before, repreſented the great rewards which will attend thoſe whom he characterizes in the beginning of the chapter; as, *the poor in ſpirit, the meek, ſuch as hungred and thirſted after righteouſneſs, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers,* and *ſuch as are perſecuted for righteouſneſs-ſake*; he goes, after this, upon the explication of the law. And to clear his way, and to reſcue the divine inſtitutions from thoſe groſs miſtakes and miſinterpretations which were put upon them by the Phariſees and Scribes, and at the ſame time

to ſhew what was the true ſenſe and meaning of the law of God, and to preſs men to a conformity to it; he at large opens his mind in the ſequel of this chapter, and in the two chapters enſuing. The people had a great veneration for the authority of the Scribes and Phariſees: and not only for the authority of their doctrine, but for that of their example; becauſe, as they pretended themſelves to be very regular and circumſpect in their converſation, ſo they managed their outward courſe of life in ſuch a manner as to gain the ſame credit amongſt the people, who looked upon them as the moſt ſtrict and circumſpect perſons in their generation. However, our Saviour ſees it neceſſary to undeceive the people, who had been long abuſed by the evil and erroneous gloſſes of the Phariſees; takes upon him to detect their vain interpretations, and miſconſtructions of the law; and pronounces, in the verſe before our text, that thoſe *who ſhould break one of the leaſt of thoſe commandments*, to which he referr'd, *and ſhould teach men ſo, ſhould be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*; *but whoſoever did, and taught them, ſhould be called great in the kingdom of heaven* [p]. As much as if our Saviour had ſaid: "It is not what men pretend to, but "what they really do; it is not enough "that the Phariſees pretend to teach the

[p] Mat. 5. 19.

" law better than others, and to fulfill it
" in their practiſe better than other men;
" many of thoſe who make theſe high pre-
" tences to knowledge and holineſs, will be
" found to come very ſhort of what they
" would have believed concerning them.
" *I am not come to deſtroy the law and the pro-*
" *phets, but to fulfill* [q]. And I am ſo far from
" deſtroying the law, that is, the moral law,
" that I pronounce it is of the higheſt conſe-
" quence for men both to do and teach it;
" and that with great ſtrictneſs and exactneſs,
" in its full extent: *For he that breaks the*
" *leaſt of theſe commandments, and teaches men*
" *to do ſo, ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of*
" *heaven.* And, for the encouragement of
" *thoſe who do and teach them, they ſhall be*
" *called great in the kingdom of heaven.* It is
" a dangerous thing for a man to neglect any
" part of his duty; either in obeying the law
" itſelf, or in his inſtructions to others about
" it. But the Scribes and Phariſees are ſo far
" from deſerving to be *called great in the king-*
" *dom of heaven*, or from having a juſt pre-
" tence unto that character, that they cannot,
" in the leaſt, be reckoned meet for it. Under
" their circumſtances, they ſhall not even be
" counted among the *leaſt in the kingdom of*
" *heaven:* for it is impoſſible for men to enter
" there, *unleſs* their *righteouſneſs exceed* that
" of *the Scribes and Phariſees.*" That is, in

[q] Mat. 5. 17.

ſhort,

ſhort, as I have told you; unleſs men be more holy than the generality, at leaſt, of the Scribes and Phariſees were, it is impoſſible for them to be ſaved. For our completer underſtanding of which words, I propoſed to conſider them in the following method:

I. To ſhew you what is meant by *the kingdom of heaven.*
II. What kind of people theſe *Scribes and Phariſees* were.
III. What kind of *righteouſneſs* theirs was.
IV. What kind of *righteouſneſs* that is, which is neceſſary in order to perſons *entring into the kingdom of heaven*; ſeeing *the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees* was not ſufficient to that purpoſe. And,
V. How it appears that it is *impoſſible* for any one *to enter into the kingdom of heaven*, who hath not that righteouſneſs which our Saviour ſpeaks of; *a righteouſneſs exceeding that of the Scribes and Phariſees.*

I have endeavoured to prove to you, 1. That tho *the kingdom of heaven* is variouſly accepted in the goſpel, yet here it ſignifies the kingdom of glory.

I have ſhewn you, in the 2d place, That the Scribes were a ſort of officers among the

Jews; and the Scribes, here mentioned, thoſe who made the law of God more eſpecially their ſtudy, and therefore were the principal teachers of the people: and that the Phariſees were a ſect of men who diſtinguiſhed themſelves from others, pretending to greater piety, greater purity of doctrine, and manners; they were, as we are told in the Acts of the Apoſtles, *the ſtricteſt ſect among the Jews* [r].

I came, in the 3d place, To conſider what kind of *righteouſneſs* that *of the Scribes and Phariſees* was. I have ſhewn you, on the one hand, that it was very ſpecious, and made a great appearance in the world; and, on the other, that it was very defective: and therefore unleſs one had a greater, a better and more excellent righteouſneſs than theirs, there was *no entring*, by our Saviour's declaration, *into that* glorious *kingdom*. I have ſhewn you that their righteouſneſs, if we take a view of it on its brighter ſide, was very popular, and much reſpected by men. For they pretended to a great purity in doctrine, and did teach certain important truths concerning the other world; the reſurrection of the dead, the exiſtence of angels and ſpirits, the immortality of the ſoul; ſuch things as were denied by other Jews, and were all weighty doctrines. They ſeemed pious towards God, very devout, and

[r] Acts 26. 5.

ſpent

ſpent much time in prayer; not only in the temple, but even *in the corners of the ſtreets.* They walked towards men after ſuch a manner as gained a great credit and reputation amongſt them: they avoided the converſation of perſons who were infamouſly wicked; and would *waſh their hands when they came from the markets*, leſt they ſhould have converſed with any who were vicious, and not know it. They were for *tithing mint, aniſe, and cummin.* They were extenſive in their bounty to the poor; and *gave alms*, it ſeems, to conſiderable numbers of people. They were very abſtemious, in *faſting twice a-week:* and ſome of them, as Joſephus repreſents, ſome of the ſtricteſt of them, would mortify themſelves after an extraordinary manner; which had a great ſhew of humility. But, notwithſtanding theſe things, and ſome others, that might be collected from the ſcripture, which we have more largely taken notice of; it ſeems their righteouſneſs was very defective, as I have ſhewn you, on various accounts. It was partial; in that they did not regard the law of God intirely. It was ſuperficial; in that they had a regard more to the external part than that which is ſpiritual, which reaches the heart and conſcience. Their obedience was hypocritical to a great degree; as appears by what our Saviour ſays concerning it, and from what he pronounces againſt them in ſo many places. They added

their own traditions, and ſuperſtitious inventions, to the law of God; and laid a ſtreſs upon them as great, and ſometimes greater, than upon the law itſelf. And even their beſt works were marr'd with pride, with oſtentation, and vain-glory: ſo that there was more of the love of applauſe than virtue appearing even in their beſt actions, they were tainted with ſo much vanity. So that we may juſtly complain of them, as the prophet Micah complains of the beſt ſort of Jews in his time: *The beſt of them is as a briar; and the moſt upright of them is ſharper than a thorn-hedge* [r]. Or, as John the baptiſt reproaches them, when he calls them *a generation of vipers* [s].

Having given you this account how far we proceeded; we are now,

IV. To inquire what kind of righteouſneſs that is, which our Saviour intends here, as neceſſary to a perſon's *entring into the kingdom of heaven.*

For the more regular proceeding in this inquiry; I ſhall firſt conſider, in a general way, what kind of righteouſneſs this is: and then explain it more particularly, in oppoſition to the *righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*, or the defects of their righteouſneſs; becauſe our Saviour here makes the compariſon. And we ſhall the better know

[r] Micah 7. 4. | [s] Luke 3. 7.

how

how much this righteouſneſs exceeds theirs, when we conſider the particular characters by which it appears to excel.

1. As to the kind of righteouſneſs in general. There are but two kinds which are neceſſary to our admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven; that righteouſneſs by which we muſt be juſtified, and that by which we muſt be ſanctified. You know how neceſſary that righteouſneſs by which we muſt be juſtified is for our admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven, by what is diſcourſed of in Rom. 5. where the apoſtle expreſly tells us of *a righteouſneſs imputed to us:* and by what the ſame apoſtle declares, 2 Cor. 5. 21. that *Chriſt was made ſin for us*, that is, by imputation, *who knew no ſin; that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him.* This is that *righteouſneſs* of which the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks to the Philippians, *chap.* 3. *in which he deſires to be found; not having his own righteouſneſs which is of the law, but the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith:* that righteouſneſs which is called the *righteouſneſs of faith*; becauſe it is apprehended by our faith, and whereby we are *juſtified from all things from which we could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes*; as is aſſerted by the apoſtle, Acts 13. 39. It is certain this is neceſſary to our introduction into the kingdom of heaven. If Chriſt's obedience, and his ſufferings, are neceſſary for our admiſſion into heaven; then that righteouſneſs which we

find in his obedience to the law of God, and in his ſubmiſſion to the cruel ſufferings of the croſs, is neceſſary to this purpoſe. There is no pardon, no reconciliation, no juſtification and acceptance of our perſons before God, without it. *We are juſtified freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt* [t]: and thereby *we have peace with God* [u]; and not otherwiſe.

But then there is another kind of righteouſneſs, that of ſanctification, which is neceſſary to our entrance into the kingdom of God: for *no unclean thing ſhall enter* there [v]; *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord* [w]; and *ſeeing the Lord*, is the ſame thing with *entring into the kingdom of heaven. Without are dogs, and ſorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters; and whoſoever loveth and maketh a lye* [x]: they are kept out of this kingdom; but thoſe who are pure and holy, have admiſſion there. *Bleſſed are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in thro' the gates into the city* [y]. *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God* [z]. Theſe, and many other places, which ſpeak as expreſly and formally to this matter, ſhew us, that ſanctification, *i. e.* inherent righteouſneſs, is neceſſary to our *entring into the*

[t] Rom. 3. 24.
[u] *Chap.* 5. 1.
[v] Rev. 21. 27.
[w] Heb. 12. 14.
[x] Rev. 22. 15.
[y] *Ver.* 14.
[z] Mat. 5. 8.

kingdom

kingdom of God. There muſt be a renovation of the mind of man; a new creation: he muſt be *born again*, or he *cannot ſee the kingdom of heaven* [a]. His heart muſt be changed by the power of the grace of God: his mind muſt be altered, his inclinations turned, his affections purified and refined: and he muſt walk holily, becauſe *without holineſs it is impoſſible to ſee* the face of God [b]; as *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him* [c].

But now the queſtion is, which of theſe two is concerned in our text? I think it is evident that the laſt is concerned, and that only, in the words of this text. It is true, from divers other texts it appears, that we muſt be juſtified by the *righteouſneſs* which *exceeds* not only *the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*, but the righteouſneſs of all other creatures whatſoever: it is true, I ſay, from many ſcriptures, that without being juſtified we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But the ſenſe of our text is, that *without holineſs*, without inherent righteouſneſs, and to ſuch a degree as to *exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*, we *cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This is eaſily prov'd, if you conſider three or four things.

(1.) The expreſs words of the text, with regard to the Scribes and Phariſees: *For I ſay unto you, Except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and*

[a] John 3. 3.
[b] Heb. 12. 14.
[c] *Chap.* 11. 6.

Phariſees,

Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven. The diſcourſe of our Saviour is about that righteouſneſs by which men conform themſelves to the law of God. The Phariſees did conform themſelves, in ſome degree, but not after that manner they ought to have done. Their righteouſneſs was very defective: and therefore it is the plain and genuine ſenſe of our Lord Jeſus, that we muſt conform ourſelves to the law of God with greater ſtrictneſs and circumſpection than the Scribes and Phariſees did; or elſe we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

(2.) Our Lord ſpeaks of this righteouſneſs as *our* righteouſneſs: *Unleſs your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees.* It ſeems neceſſary therefore to interpret theſe words as having regard unto *our* inherent righteouſneſs. The righteouſneſs by which we are juſtified, is Chriſt's righteouſneſs: but the righteouſneſs by which we are ſanctified, is called *ours*; becauſe our ſouls are the ſubjects of it. It is a righteouſneſs wrought in our ſouls. And *our* righteouſneſs is oppoſed, in ſcripture, to the righteouſneſs whereby we are juſtified; to the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. And thus the apoſtle to the Philippians deſires, *not to be found in his own righteouſneſs* [d]. It is not likely therefore, if our Lord had meant that

[d] Phil. 3. 9.

of

of juſtification here in our text, that he would have called the righteouſneſs whereby we are juſtified, *our* righteouſneſs; becauſe it is aſſerted plainly, in ſcripture, that we cannot be juſtified by *our own righteouſneſs*: nay, not that which is wrought in us by the grace of God, by the effectual operation of his ſpirit; we cannot be ſaved by that. It is by the obedience of Chriſt that *many are made righteous* [e], in point of juſtification. So that if we will interpret this text according to the current of the ſacred ſcriptures, it muſt be acknowledged that *our* righteouſneſs means inherent righteouſneſs; that righteouſneſs of which *our ſouls* are the ſubjects. If it had been meant of juſtification, then it would have been ſpoken of in other terms. For tho the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is, in a ſort, *made ours* by imputation; yet it is not ſo expreſs in the ſcripture as to be called *our righteouſneſs*, after the manner this is here in the text. He indeed is called *the Lord our righteouſneſs* [f]; and we are ſaid to be *made the righteouſneſs of God in him* [g]: but we are ſtill told it is his righteouſneſs whereby we are juſtified. And that righteouſneſs is not called *ours*: and eſpecially it is not likely it was ſo here, ſince if our Lord had intended the righteouſneſs of juſtification, it would have been ſo neceſſary for him to have explained that doctrine at the ſame

[e] Rom. 5 19.
[f] Jer. 23. 6.
[g] 2 Cor. 5. 21.

time;

time; ſeeing the Scribes and Phariſees, and the reſt of the people, ſeemed to be ſo ignorant of it.

(3.) This farther appears, if we compare the words of our text with what immediately goes before. Our Lord is aſſerting, that *he came not to deſtroy the law*: and he declares in *ver.* 19. *whoſoever ſhall break one of the leaſt of theſe commandments*, that is, of the moral law, *and ſhall teach men ſo, ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*; *but whoſoever does and teaches them, the ſame ſhall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* Here are two things in queſtion in our text: how righteous perſons ought to be; and then, what reward there ſhall be of that righteouſneſs. In the words before our text, our Lord was ſpeaking of the ſame reward of *the kingdom of heaven*, and of the degrees of glory in it; who ſhould be little, and who ſhould be great: and he is likewiſe ſpeaking of *breaking* and *keeping the law*; and he is upon the ſame ſubject in our text. If therefore, in the words immediately before our text, he promiſes a reward of *greatneſs in the kingdom of heaven* to men who were holy, and kept the law, and taught men ſo; he does ſo here. It is neceſſary therefore that the *righteouſneſs* in our text be the ſame as *doing and teaching the law*; and therefore muſt be that of ſanctification, or inherent righteouſneſs. The words after our text do make this as plain as the words before;

before: for, as our Saviour introduces the text with these words, *For I say unto you*; which *for* does connect the words to those going before; so he explains himself afterwards, by shewing how defective *the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees* was, in explaining the law, in explaining what it did require of us. *You have heard it hath been said by them of old time*, says he, *Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire* [p]. Here we may observe two things.

1. That our Saviour shews what will be the danger of transgressing the law; which is expressed by the terms of *judgment, council, and hell-fire:* and therefore by a parity of reason he is shewing, in our text, what will be the reward of those who observe the law.

The 2d observation I make, is, that when our Lord had shewn in general *the righteousness of the Pharisees* was very defective; he here explains it, and shews how we should keep the law, if we would *enter into the kingdom of heaven.* He shews that we should not only

[p] Mat. 5. 21, 22.

abstain

abſtain from actual murder in killing a man; but muſt bridle our paſſions, ſo as not to give ill language, or conceive indecent reſentments in our minds againſt others. And then in *ver.* 27. *You have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery: but I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* Our Saviour here again ſhews it is not enough for a man to govern himſelf as to his external converſation; but he muſt govern his heart, and his thoughts, if he would be obedient to the law: and the like may be ſaid concerning other precepts. He ſhews us the duty of mortification; that theſe darling corruptions, theſe evil inclinations, which are as near to us as our *right-hand*, or *right-eye*, muſt be *cut off, and plucked out* [i], if we would avoid everlaſting deſtruction. He then ſhews that men were not guiltleſs, for doing that which they were permitted to do thro' the hardneſs of their hearts; in *ſending away a woman with a bill of divorcement, for any cauſe leſs than fornication* [k]. And then, having added, that *it had been ſaid of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf, but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*; our Saviour ſhews they might, in this reſpect, be criminal, tho they did not forſwear themſelves; that they took the

[i] Mat. 5. 29, 30. | [k] *Ver.* 31, 32.

name

name of God in vain, if, upon any ſlight and trivial occaſion, they made uſe of an oath; and it ſeems, upon ſuch occaſions, our Lord forbids them *to ſwear at all*[1]. They were likewiſe charg'd by him as guilty of great evil, in *ſwearing by heaven*, and *by the earth*, *by Jeruſalem*, or *by their head*; becauſe as God is the only object of worſhip, as God only knows the heart, and an oath is an appeal to *the ſearcher of hearts*, it is improper to ſwear by any other but him. I might ſhew you, in a great many other inſtances, how our Saviour explain'd to them the obligations of charity, the manner of giving alms; how he directed them in acts of piety, in praying, and the like; and in forgiving of injuries, and loving not only their friends, but their enemies. But this is ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe; to prove, that it is the deſign of our Saviour, in the ſequel of his diſcourſe, to ſhew how men ſhould be righteous, how they ought to obſerve the law of God, that they might have a *righteouſneſs* to *exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*; and, *without which, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

I need inſiſt no farther upon this; for, I think, it is plainly proved what righteouſneſs it is which is concerned in our text: tho I may add this one conſideration; that if our Saviour had meant a righteouſneſs of

[1] Mat. 5. 33——37.

juſtification, he might as well have ſaid, *Unleſs your righteouſneſs exceed* not only *that of the Scribes and Phariſees*, but the righteouſneſs of all mankind in general, *you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven:* and the righteouſneſs you muſt be juſtified by, muſt be a righteouſneſs exceeding the righteouſneſs of all the world put together. How can any imagine that our Lord would put the caſe ſo low, *Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, if he had meant a righteouſneſs of juſtification? He muſt therefore mean the righteouſneſs of ſanctification, that this muſt *exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*; or elſe why does he mention their names? For the righteouſneſs of juſtification muſt exceed theirs, and all others beſides: ſo that it would be to no purpoſe to mention their names particularly.

Having ſhewn you what this righteouſneſs is in the general, that it is to be holy, that it is inherent righteouſneſs; we are now,

2. To conſider, in a particular manner, wherein *our righteouſneſs* muſt *exceed that of the Scribes and Phariſees.* And I need not be long upon this; becauſe it will be proper for me to compare the characters of the righteouſneſs which Chriſt recommends, with thoſe of the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, which have been mentioned before. The excellency of the one, and the

defects of the other, will beſt appear when they are ſet together in the ſame light. Therefore,

(1.) Whereas their righteouſneſs, as hath been told you, was partial, they ſeemed to obey ſome laws, but rejected others; ours muſt be univerſal. Not that there is any man who lives and does not ſin; nor may we pretend that any man underſtands the full ſcope of the divine law in all the inſtances of it; good men have been, and are defective: but we ought to be impartial in our reſolutions, in the inclinations and deſires of our minds; and ſo far as God gives us light and opportunity, our reſolutions, and deſires, and endeavours, muſt be *to have reſpect unto all his laws. Then ſhall I not be aſhamed*, ſays the pſalmiſt, *when I have reſpect to all thy commandments* [m]. Can a man be honeſt and upright, who, when he ſees the ſame authority enjoins ſeveral things, will tranſgreſs the law, and affront its authority in ſome of thoſe inſtances, and, at the ſame time, pretend to a great deal of reſpect to it in others? The Phariſees *gave alms*, but yet were very covetous: as if it were an acceptable offering to God to ſhew themſelves charitable, to perform acts of charity with that money which they had gotten by extortion: as if it were a meritorious action in them to re-

[m] Pſal. 119. 6.

lieve ſome poor families, when they had *devoured widows houſes* to gain ſubſtance to themſelves: or as if it were enough to *make long prayers* to God, while they carried on deſigns to cheat men. In many inſtances it appeared they were very partial: they ſeemed to have a great regard to ſome laws; they would *pay tithe of mint, aniſe, and cummin*; *but*, at the ſame time, *neglected judgment, mercy, and faith* [n]. Thus partial was their righteouſneſs: but the obligation we are under to holineſs, if we would *enter into the kingdom of heaven*, is *to abſtain from all evil*, to *abhor that which is evil* [o]; nay, to *abſtain from all appearances of evil* [p]. We muſt have hearty deſires and reſolutions to *have reſpect unto all God's righteous precepts*, ſo far as we find *what is his good and acceptable will*, if we would be expectants of heaven, and candidates of glory. And whenever we err, and are defective, it will occaſion a godly ſorrow, if our ſouls have ſuch a regard to the divine will. This will be the drift, the bent, and inclination of our minds, to have reſpect to the whole law of God; that we *may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work* [q].

(2.) Another character of this holineſs which muſt *exceed that of the Scribes and Phariſees*, is; that it muſt be principally

[n] Mat. 23. 23.
[o] Rom. 12. 9.
[p] 1 Theſ. 5. 22.
[q] Col. 1. 10.

internal,

internal, in oppoſition to theirs, which was chiefly ſuperficial. This was a great defect: they did not only diſregard ſome of God's precepts; but they had often the greateſt regard to thoſe which were of the leaſt moment, and ſlighted thoſe that were of the higheſt conſequence: as in what I inſtanced but now; in their *tithing mint, aniſe, and cummin*; and *neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.* If we would be ſtrictly pious, truly religious, we muſt look to our hearts, and *try our own ways* [r]; and be able to appeal to him, who *knows the ſecrets of all hearts*, that we do ſo; and that we earneſtly deſire of him to reform and regulate what is amiſs in us. *Search me, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting* [f]. It is not enough for us to perform external acts of holineſs and piety, or to appear with a countenance that carries with it an air of devotion; unleſs our ſouls are touch'd, our affections mov'd; unleſs *our deſires be to God, and to the remembrance of his name* [t]. Unleſs we improve in knowledge and in grace, and in the internal habits of our minds, God will not accept our ſervices, our external forms, and our appearance of devotion. It is not enough to abſtain from thoſe actions which will bring diſreputation upon us

[r] Lam. 3. 40.
[f] Pſal. 139. 23, 24.
[t] Iſa. 26. 8.

amongſt men; but we muſt *love* that *truth*, which, as the pſalmiſt ſays, *God requires in the inward parts* [u]. We muſt have a good and honeſt heart, if we would be truly holy; and mind eſpecially the internal prevalence of piety in our ſouls. *The tree muſt be good*, or *elſe the fruit will not be ſo* [v]. The heart of man is eſpecially regarded by God; becauſe it is the moſt excellent part. And tho a man put on a ſhew of religion, and do ſome things which are materially good; unleſs he do them with an honeſt heart, they will not be acceptable to God. We muſt place religion in thoſe things which are of the higheſt conſequence, that our religion may be wiſe and prudent. Superſtitious perſons will ſhew abundance of zeal in ſome leſſer matters, when they neglect the greateſt buſineſs; faith, love, charity, humility, and piety. But where there is true religion, and ſuch as God approves, there muſt be a reformation of our ſouls, and the work of God muſt be carried on in our inner man; that ſo we may have a ſteady and conſtant regard to piety and holineſs, in the courſe of our converſations. This muſt be the care of one who is truly religious; and will certainly be his care. And this leads me to obſerve,

(3.) That it muſt be ſincere, in oppoſition to hypocritical; as it muſt be internal, in

[u] Pſal. 51. 6. | [v] Luke 6. 43.

oppo-

oppoſition to ſuperficial holineſs. It muſt be placed in things which are, in a ſpecial manner, excellent: but then the whole of it muſt be ſincere; for a man may ſeem to lay a great ſtreſs upon things which are of the higheſt conſequence in religion, and yet may be hypocritical at bottom. It is a great act of worſhip to pray to God: and the Phariſees did this often; and they *made long prayers:* but it was only for a pretence, that under this ſpecious appearance they might deceive and cheat the people who admired and followed them: *For a pretence, they made long prayers* [w], ſays our Saviour. I need not take up much of your time upon this: for every one knows that if our piety, if our religion, if our practice of holineſs, if our moral converſation amongſt men, if our good and ſavoury ſpeeches, are not ſincere; we are ſo far from being pious, holy perſons, that we are ſo much the more wicked, by how much the higher pretence we make to religion. For this is a being guilty of that ſin which is ſo juſtly hated of men, and abhorred of God, that, it ſeems, a portion of the greateſt puniſhment is allotted to it. The unfaithful ſervant, whoſe puniſhment is expreſſed to be very great, is ordered *amongſt hypocrites; where there is weeping, and gnaſhing of teeth* [x]. It is as high an affront to God, and an abuſe to man, for a perſon to

[w] Mat. 23. 14. | [x] *Chap.* 24. 51.

be hypocritically pious, or juſt, or holy, as for him to want piety, holineſs, and juſtice; and, to all the reſt of his evils, to add one of the greateſt crimes in the world beſides. So that it is plain there muſt be ſincerity; and this ſincerity ought to be univerſal. If there wants ſincerity, it will ſpoil the moſt ſpecious actions: but this ſincerity muſt go thro' the whole courſe of our converſations.

(4.) Our holineſs muſt be free from ſuperſtition, as much as poſſible. It is true, that very ſerious perſons ſometimes may be guilty of ſuperſtition: but it ought to be the deſire and endeavour of every perſon, and is neceſſarily ſo of every one who is truly religious, to keep his devotion and his converſation free from ſuperſtition; becauſe this is offenſive to God. The Phariſees join'd their traditions to the law of God; as if they would make up their defect of conformity to the law by ſome inventions of their own, or their anceſtors, which God had not commanded. They would defile themſelves with ſin; and then they would be accounted holy, for *waſhing their hands often* [y], and making uſe of various immerſions which were not required by the law of God. But our Saviour ſays; *In vain do ye worſhip me, teaching for doctrines the commands of men* [z]. We ſhould therefore ſtrive, as much as poſſible,

[y] Mark 7. 2.

[z] Mat. 15. 9.

to

to keep ourſelves from the contagion of ſuperſtition, leſt we ſhould give that authority to the dictates of men which is due only to the holy law of God; leſt we ſhould vainly ſpend our time about idle cuſtoms and traditions, which may be profitably ſpent in meditating upon the law of God, and in aſpiring after a conformity to it; leſt we ſhould fall under a temptation to ſet theſe above the divine precepts, and *make void the law of God* [a], as the Phariſees did, by amuſing ourſelves with things which are of no conſequence, but rather tend to taint and corrupt the ſoul, and ſpoil that ſpiritual guſt which we ought to have. We ſhould have a diſtinguiſhing reliſh for the law of God, before all the commandments of men. Our *righteouſneſs* ought to *exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees,*

(5.) In being adorned with humility. *Be ye clothed with humility* [b], ſays the apoſtle Peter. And it is not only a clothing to hide our defects, but an *ornament* [c] to adorn our converſation. Pride is a ſin abhorred of God: and it renders a man mean and little in the view of diſcreet and wiſe men. It is a ſin of which the Phariſees were greatly guilty: and nothing is more misbecoming a perſon who pretends to religion, than that affectation and vanity which ſhews he is proud of his performances. What can that

[a] Mat. 15. 6.
[b] 1 Pet. 5. 5.
[c] *Chap.* 3. 4.

ſervice be worth which is tainted with vain-glory? what can it be worth in the ſight of God, *who reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble* [d]? We find the moſt holy men, in the Old Teſtament, ſpeak of themſelves to God in terms of the moſt profound humility. Abraham calls himſelf *duſt and aſhes*; and prefaces his prayer with, *Behold, now I have taken upon me to ſpeak unto the Lord, who am but duſt and aſhes* [e]. Job, of whom God himſelf boaſts, *haſt thou conſidered my ſervant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and eſcheweth evil* [f]: yet even he proſtrates himſelf before the Almighty, and cries out; *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee; wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes* [g]. The apoſtle Paul, who ſeems to have been the moſt eminent ſervant of God that ever appeared in the world for his preaching-capacity, and for his ſucceſſes in converting a multitude of ſouls, calls himſelf *leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints* [h], *the chief of ſinners* [i], and one who was *not worthy to be called an apoſtle* [k]. With what an abhorrence does God reject the ſervices of thoſe who are proud and vain-glorious, whoſe chief aim is that others may

[d] 1 Pet. 5. 5.
[e] Gen. 18. 27.
[f] Job 1. 8.
[g] *Chap.* 42. 5, 6.
[h] Eph. 3. 8.
[i] 1 Tim. 1. 15.
[k] 1 Cor. 15. 9.

take

take notice of their pretended piety, and celebrate their praiſes; inſtead of conſidering, that the true and proper end of our worſhiping God, is that he and he alone may be glorified? How many of our works which are materially good, are loſt and ſpoiled upon this account? How many acts of charity might meet with a reward from the hand of God, if they were not tainted with this corrupt principle? But when men give alms, not becauſe the perſons to whom they give bear the image of God, but becauſe they would gain reputation amongſt men; our Saviour ſays, *they have their reward* [l]; they have all they are to expect. And ſo one may ſay concerning other acts which are materially good; how vain and vile do they appear, when the perſon who performs them is guilty of this vain-glory and oſtentation? There muſt be ſimplicity therefore, and integrity of mind, joined with this humility; which is *an ornament of great price in the ſight of God* [m].

And then *our righteouſneſs* will indeed *exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*; if in our devotion towards God, and our converſation amongſt men, and in the government of our own ſouls and bodies; if in the exerciſe of piety and religion, and juſtice and charity, of temperance, and the

[l] Mat. 6. 2. | [m] 1 Pet. 3. 4.

government of our own paſſions; if in all things we have regard to the whole of God's will, and endeavour to be conformed and to ſubject ourſelves to all his righteous precepts; if we have a regard to the internal exerciſe of piety, charity and juſtice; to the motions of our minds, as well as to our hands, and eyes, and lips; to the great and important matters of our duty, in a ſpecial manner, not leaving undone things which may ſeem of leſſer conſequence, counting all great in regard to the authority of the lawgiver, tho they are not great in their own nature; if we are ſincere and upright in the management of the whole of our duty; if we are deſirous to be conformable to God's law ſo ſtrictly as not to admit of any competition betwixt that and the precepts of men; if we are holy and regular, without ſuperſtition, and without profaning the law of God with corrupt mixtures, according to the beſt of our light and knowledge; if we are ſincerely *holy, and upright in all manner of converſation*, and endeavour to preſerve all from the corrupt mixture of will-worſhip and ſuperſtition, and in all acknowledge ourſelves *unprofitable ſervants*; being ſtill *clothed with humility*, doing what we do to pleaſe God, being ſenſible of the excellency of his law, and not to gain applauſe among men; doing what we do out of a pure conſcience, without regard to ſiniſter ends; doing what we do unto God, out of zeal for his glory,

and

and from a tender regard to the good of others, and a careful concern for the ſalvation of our own ſouls.

This is the character, take it altogether, of the holineſs which our Lord recommends in our text, and in the ſequel of this chapter: where he explains the law to theſe great purpoſes; as you will more particularly ſee, if you'll give yourſelves time to read our Saviour's ſermon through. This is the character of that righteouſneſs which *exceeds the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees.*

I would not that any one ſhould, from what hath been ſaid, ſo miſconſtrue me as to imagine that in order to enter the heavenly kingdom a man muſt riſe up to theſe characters in the higheſt degree; for that would be to be perfectly holy. He who hath all theſe things in perfection, is fit for the kingdom of heaven: but there is no inhabitant of this world can pretend to that. But as to our inclinations, our deſires, and endeavours, our purſuing theſe ends and purpoſes, and ſeeking to be conformable to the divine will, as much as is poſſible and conſiſtent with this frail ſtate, and our ſerious repentance when we fall ſhort of theſe characters; this is what I aim at. And it is evident, by what our Saviour ſays, that our righteouſneſs muſt be of ſuch a character and ſuch a kind: and we muſt aſpire after higher and higher degrees of holineſs; we muſt labour to walk more and more conformably to the will of God,

God, thro'out the whole courſe of our converſations.

I ſhould come now to the laſt thing: and my buſineſs would be to ſhew you, if I had time, how neceſſary this is to our *entring into the kingdom of heaven*; how neceſſary it is to be holy, thus ſtrictly and ſincerely holy, if ever we would *enter into the kingdom of God*. This is a matter of very great conſequence, and furniſhes us with an extraordinary motive to holineſs, if the neceſſity hereof be cleared up and made manifeſt. But ſince the time will not allow me to do this at preſent, I ſhall refer it to another ſeaſon: and, in the mean time, take that for granted, which I deſign, if it pleaſe God, more largely to prove and demonſtrate to you; that there is no *entring into the kingdom of God* without being ſtrictly holy. What hath been ſaid, however, ſhews;

1. Of how great conſequence our Saviour's coming into the world was; not only on the account of the ſufferings he was to undergo to reconcile us to God, and the excellent example he was to ſet before men, to ſhew them the way of holineſs and purity; but on the account of his excellent doctrine, ſo happily deſign'd to diſabuſe the ignorant world, which was led by thoſe indeed who pretended to much piety, but had it not. In what a miſerable ſtate was the church of the Jews at this time; when the

the brighteſt patterns, and the moſt excellent examples they had, fell ſhort of a righteouſneſs which was ſo neceſſary to make a good man, and an inhabitant of the kingdom of heaven? Oh! how neceſſary was our Saviour's preſence in the world, to undeceive men upon ſuch an occaſion as this was; when they were ſo univerſally corrupted, and their falſe gloſſes had ſo clouded the ſpirituality of the law of God, and hid it from the common people?

2. How does this demonſtrate the truth, purity, and excellency of the chriſtian religion? Certainly that religion is beſt which is moſt becoming God, which promotes holineſs the moſt ſtrictly. This is a proof that Chriſtianity is true; and that our Lord Jeſus, the author of the true religion, was the true Meſſias. A wicked man, an impoſtor, could never have taught at ſuch a rate as this; and have excell'd all who went before him in his doctrine, as well as outſhin'd them all in the exemplary pattern he ſet. He was *without ſin*; *no guile was ever found in his mouth* [n].

3. Let what hath been ſaid make us all examine our own hearts, and conſider whether we pretend to holineſs or not. If we do; let us ſee whether we are Phariſaical pretenders only; or whether we have that true and genuine purity, that holineſs of heart

[n] 1 Pet. 2. 22.

and

and life, which our Saviour requires. Let us compare our lives with the law of God, and Chriſt's explication of it: let us ſee the ſpirituality of that law, and conſider how great and important a thing it is to be truly a chriſtian. How ſhould we ſpend our time, and improve all the talents which we enjoy, for the advancement of this work of holineſs upon our ſouls, if we are chriſtians indeed? And, if we are not; how ſhould this awaken us to a ſenſe of our danger? What will become of the vain hypocritical pretenders to holineſs; of thoſe whoſe righteouſneſs is but like that *of the Scribes and Phariſees*; who make a ſhew of religion, but have it not in their hearts; who pretend to love God, but in their works it appears they deny him; who ſay they will conform themſelves to the divine law, and yet it appears that they walk contrary to it, in the courſe of their converſations, in many inſtances? What will become of profane perſons; and what will become of the hypocritical? The profane do not ſo much as pretend to a righteouſneſs *like that of the Scribes and Phariſees*; therefore they can have no hope: and, as for the hypocrite; what is his hope, but *as the ſpider's web? The hope of the hypocrite ſhall periſh* [o]. As for thoſe who are ſincere, whoſe main aim and deſire is after holineſs, whoſe ſouls have

[o] Job 8. 13, 14.

a

a true reliſh of ſpiritual things, who deſire nothing ſo much as to be holy, and the remainder of whoſe corruptions gives them the principal trouble they endure; theſe are good evidences that they fall not under the character of hypocrites. As for thoſe who ſay, *Lord, what I know not, teach thou me; and wherein I have done evil, I will do ſo no more* [p]; who are ſenſible of their own defects, and conſtantly implore his grace, and who pray as ſincerely that they may be holy, as that they may be happy; that they may be made *meet for the kingdom of God* [q], as that they may *enter therein:* theſe are truly religious; theſe are true candidates of glory. Theſe are *running the race that is ſet before them* [r]; at the end of which is a reward of *eternal life.* Theſe are they who *aſk, and ſhall receive; ſeek, and ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto them* [s]. Their petitions for more grace, and victory over ſin, ſhall be anſwered. And tho ſometimes their ſorrows are great, for want of a more perfect conformity to the rule of God's word, in various inſtances; yet *bleſſed are they that mourn now,* who mourn after that manner on the account of their ſins, *for they ſhall be comforted* [s]. Tho now their deſires are importunate, and they are uneaſy becauſe they cannot ſee *Chriſt formed in them* as they

[p] Job 34. 32.
[q] Col. 1. 12.
[r] Heb. 12. 1.
[s] Luke 11. 9, 10.
[s] Mat. 5. 4.

would do; yet *bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled* [t]. Tho their conſciences are agitated on the account of their tranſgreſſing the laws of God in various inſtances; yet there is a foundation of calmneſs, joy, and peace of conſcience laid for them. They are tender, and they tremble at God's word: they are in the way to be purified, and made more and more holy.

As for thoſe who walk ſtrictly with God, and have been aſſiſted by his grace, ſo as that tho they have reaſon to humble themſelves daily for their defects, yet they have not been ſuffered to ſlip into any more than common frailties and infirmities; *upon whoſe tabernacles the light of God's candle ſhines, ſo that by his light they walk thro' darkneſs* [u]; in whoſe heart reigns *the peace of God, which paſſes all underſtanding*; and who *in believing rejoice, with joy unſpeakable and full of glory* [v]; who can triumph, with the apoſtle, in the grace of God, tho they confeſs that they could not be able to do this of themſelves: oh! how much is it their intereſt to *walk humbly with God* [w], leſt their conſciences be wounded, their peace and joy interrupted; leſt clouds and darkneſs interpoſe between their ſouls and heaven, and they be left in ſuch a condition as may expoſe them to temptations? It is our higheſt intereſt, not

[t] Mat. 5. 6.
[u] Job 29. 3, 4.
[v] 1 Pet. 1. 8.
[w] Micah 6. 8.

only

only in regard of the glory of the kingdom of heaven into which we may expect to enter if we are truly holy; but it is our higheſt intereſt in regard of the foretaſte of that glory, and the peace of conſcience that we ſhall reap in this world while we are here; our higheſt intereſt to take care *what manner of perſons* we *be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs* [x].

Let what hath been ſaid, therefore, have its proper and awful influence upon our minds: for it is certain, *that except our righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And our Saviour ſuppoſes and intimates, that if it does, in ſuch a manner, exceed the righteouſneſs of thoſe he reproves, ſo as that it carries in it contrary characters to theirs; we ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Let this encourage our ſteadineſs and conſtancy; our ſtrict and circumſpect walk. Let us *labour abundantly in the work of the Lord; be ſtedfaſt, and unmoveable therein: knowing that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord* [y].

[x] 2 Pet. 3. 11. | [y] 1 Cor. 15. 58.

SERMON VII.

Preach'd at

PINNERS-HALL, May 12, 1705.

MATT. V. 20.

For I ſay unto you, That except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The third SERMON on this text.

YOU have been before informed that the deſign of our Saviour in this ſermon pronounced upon the mount, and contain'd in this, and the two following chapters, was to vindicate the divine law from the falſe interpretations and miſconſtructions put upon it by the Scribes and Phariſees; and to explain to the people the ſpirituality, and due extent, and obligation, and duration, of that holy law which is contain'd in the ten commandments. For it is of the moral

moral law that our Saviour diſcourſes, and ſeveral branches of which he explains largely in this ſermon. In the words immediately before our text, he ſhews the danger of perſons acting contrary to, or teaching others to tranſgreſs, any one of the leaſt of thoſe precepts; for, indeed, they are all of great conſequence: he ſays, ſuch *ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*; but *he that doth, and teacheth them, ſhall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* For, our Lord Jeſus had before ſhewn, that great rewards would attend a ſincere regard to religion and holineſs, in pronouncing thoſe bleſſings which are mentioned in the beginning of this ſermon. But it is not enough to ſhew men what will be the excellent conſequence of true religion: our Lord would alſo explain to them wherein true religion and holineſs conſiſts; that they might not amuſe themſelves with vain appearances, and imagine they were in the way to happineſs, when they had not learnt what true holineſs meant. And becauſe they depended much upon, and were in danger to be corrupted by, the doctrine of the Scribes and Phariſees; our Lord Jeſus here very plainly declared himſelf to his diſciples, and the reſt of the people that attended to his doctrine, that *unleſs their righteouſneſs exceeded that of the Scribes and Phariſees, they ſhould in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.* As to the form of his ſpeech, it is

very authoritative, and ſignifies the importance of what he taught. *Verily I ſay unto you:* that is, take notice of it; I expreſly tell you of this matter, and lay it before you, as a warning, that you deceive not yourſelves; *unleſs your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.* For the explication of theſe words, I propoſed to ſhew you;

I. What is meant by *the kingdom of heaven.*
II. What kind of people theſe *Scribes and Phariſees* were.
III. What was *the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees,* with which our Saviour finds ſo much fault, and of which he ſpeaks as very defective.
IV. What kind of righteouſneſs that is, which is requiſite to *entring into the kingdom of heaven*; and, without which, it is not poſſible to enter.
V. How it appears that it is impoſſible for any one to *enter into the kingdom of heaven,* who hath not that righteouſneſs which our Saviour ſpeaks of; a *righteouſneſs exceeding that of the Scribes and Phariſees.*

I have proved to you, in the 1ſt place, that tho *the kingdom of heaven* often ſignifies the goſpel-ſtate of the New Teſtament;

ment; yet, in this place, it muſt ſignify the kingdom of glory, and not the kingdom of grace preciſely.

I have ſhewn you, in the 2d place, that theſe Scribes and Phariſees were perſons of the moſt eminent account among the Jews for piety and holineſs, at the time when our Saviour appeared upon the earth. The Scribes were certain officers that were converſant in the law of God: and, as they made it their ſtudy, ſo they profeſſed to explain it to the people, and to conform themſelves to it. The Phariſees were the ſtricteſt ſect among the Jews; who had the greateſt reputation among them for holineſs: and of theſe many were Scribes. Now this is a very awful conſideration, that our Saviour ſhould ſpeak thus of thoſe who were diſtinguiſh'd from the reſt for piety amongſt the Jews; that unleſs the righteouſneſs of his followers exceeded theirs, *they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

In the 3d place, I have ſhewn you, what this *righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees* was, which our Saviour charges with ſo great defects, that without a better righteouſneſs there is no entring the kingdom of heaven. I have ſhewn you this righteouſneſs on its bright, and on its dark ſide. Upon its bright ſide: that the Scribes and Phariſees, eſpecially the Phariſees, and thoſe Scribes who were of their ſect, were greatly eſteemed among the people for the ſtrictneſs

of their converſations, in various reſpects; and for the purity of their doctrine too. For the purity of their doctrine: they held the reſurrection of the body, the exiſtence of angels and ſpirits, and the immortality of the ſoul; which are ſome of the main principles upon which religion is founded, and from whence are derived the greateſt motives to engage men to holineſs and purity: that they were famous for their attention on divine worſhip; for the appearing fervency of their prayers; for their alms-deeds, which, it ſeems, were done by them liberally, to a conſiderable number of people. Famous they were for their ſtrictneſs in matters of piety and juſtice, in that they would not omit *tithing mint, aniſe, and cummin:* ſo zealous ſeemed they to be for promoting and upholding the worſhip of God; and made ſo great a pretence to the moſt exact juſtice. In ſhort, it appears, that in regard of piety towards God, and charity and juſtice towards men, as well as in reſpect of their temperate and abſtemious manner of life, and the profeſſed circumſpection of their walk, they were perſons of great eminency: and yet *their righteouſneſs*, it ſeems, was not ſufficient to introduce them *into the kingdom of heaven.*

For, on the other ſide, we have obſerved to you, that notwithſtanding this fair appearance, generally ſpeaking, theſe people had

had great defects and blemiſhes in their righteouſneſs. They were partial in the law of God; having reſpect to ſome things, when they undervalued others. They were ſuperficial: for they ſeemed to have a greater regard to leſſer things, ſuch as *tithing of mint, aniſe, and cummin*, than to thoſe of greater importance; ſuch as *judgment, mercy, and faith*, the greater matters of the law. They were ſuperſtitious: and, while they obſerved God's law materially, they mixed their own traditions with the commands of God; *and made void the law of God by their own traditions.* They were hypocritical, beſides; and made much greater pretence to religion than was proper for them, conſidering they had ſo ſlight and ſlender a regard to the main eſſentials of it. And then, they were vain-glorious: and thoſe duties which were materially good, thoſe actions of theirs which ſeemed to be the beſt, were ſpoiled by the perverſe and untoward diſpoſition of their minds; they ſetting ſuch a high value upon them, as if the Almighty were beholden to them for their ſervices; or as if they were capable of meriting thereby.

I have alſo ſhewn you, in the 4th place, what that righteouſneſs is, that muſt *exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*; and, *without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* I have ſhewn you there is a twofold righteouſneſs requiſite to our entrance into that glorious kingdom; a

righteouſneſs by which we muſt be juſtified, and a righteouſneſs whereby we muſt be ſanctified. That righteouſneſs by which we muſt be juſtified, is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed to us; which we muſt apprehend by faith. That whereby we are ſanctified, is an inherent righteouſneſs, wrought in us by the ſpirit of God; whereby we are regenerated, and become *new creatures*; whereby ſin is mortified, and grace implanted, and nouriſhed, and made to grow in our ſouls: and, without this, *we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* I have ſhewn you that this latter is the righteouſneſs meant in our text. For, tho it is true, that none can enter into the kingdom of heaven but ſuch as have the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; yet this is not the doctrine concerned in this text, tho it is in divers others. And I think I have proved to you, by many undeniable arguments, that the righteouſneſs the text means, is a righteouſneſs of ſanctification. We muſt be holy by a righteouſneſs inherent in us, and exerciſed in our lives, beyond that of the Scribes and Phariſees; or elſe we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The deſign of our Saviour, in this ſermon, and particularly in this verſe, appears to be this; that he is ſpeaking of a moral righteouſneſs and holineſs: and, if he had not been ſpeaking of that, he needed not have ſaid *our righteouſneſs muſt exceed that*

of

of the Scribes and Phariſees; or elſe *we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* For, if he means the righteouſneſs of juſtification; it muſt not only exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, but that of the greateſt ſaints who ever were in the world.

Having given you this brief recapitulation, I come now to the laſt thing I propoſed to conſider:

V. The impoſſibility of entring into the kingdom of heaven without ſuch a holineſs as that which we have been ſpeaking of; a holineſs, or righteouſneſs, which *exceeds that of the Scribes and Phariſees*; true, ſincere, genuine, internal holineſs, and purity; a principle of holineſs that muſt prevail, and govern a perſon in the courſe of his converſation. Tho *there is not a juſt man upon earth that doth good, and ſinneth not* [z]; yet none but ſuch as *mortify the deeds of the body*, whoſe ſouls are governed by a principle of holineſs, who walk holily before God, *can enter into the kingdom of heaven.* It muſt be a ſincere, hearty, holy, and internal principle which muſt govern men, in oppoſition to that partial, hypocritical, vain-glorious, and ſuperficial holineſs to which the Phariſees aſpired; and which they thought was ſo excellent, that it was ſufficient to introduce them into glory. Chriſtianity

[z] Eccleſ. 7. 20.

teaches

teaches us another thing; explains to us the law of God, and ſhews us our obligation to another manner of holineſs than they could juſtly pretend to. This may be proved to you many ways; that it is neceſſary we ſhould have a true, ſincere, genuine, prevailing principle of holineſs in us, or elſe we *cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

1. It will appear from the nature of God: the nature of that God who hath the keys of hell and death, and of heaven and glory too; who is the ſovereign judge and governour of the world, and diſpoſes of all perſons as he pleaſes; who diſpenſes rewards and puniſhments, according to the rules of wiſdom and juſtice. It is inconſiſtent with the nature of God, it is inconſiſtent with the divine perfections, to make a man who is in a ſtate of ſin, a perſon who is ungodly and unholy, to make him happy and glorious. It is true, thoſe who were once ſinners, once ungodly and unholy, may be made holy: but I ſpeak now of making perſons happy and glorious, who remain in a ſtate of unholineſs and ungodlineſs; this is inconſiſtent with the divine nature. If we will conſult the idea we have of God as a being infinitely perfect; or if we will conſult what the ſcriptures declare concerning his eſſential attributes; this will appear as clear as can be, that there is an abſolute contrariety betwixt God and ſin, if we account God to be holy. And if we do not,

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we take from him his greateſt perfection; we remove that from him which is neceſſary to conſider, if we will allow him to be God. If he is God, he is infinitely perfect: and if he is infinitely perfect, he hath this perfection of holineſs. The ſcripture declares he is *holy*; *glorious in holineſs* [a]. The holy penmen take an extraordinary pleaſure in repreſenting him as holy. The holy angels cry, *Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty*; in Iſa. 6. And in Rev. 4. we have the ſame acclamation and aſcription of holineſs to him. And in ſome Greek copies it is nine times pronounced, inſtead of three. All this ſhews how inſeparable this attribute is from the divine Being. And if God be holy, infinitely holy; then he hath an infinite averſion to ſin; he hates it with an irreconcileable hatred. Sin muſt be as oppoſite to him, to his holy nature, as darkneſs is oppoſite to light. There can be no agreement betwixt infinite holineſs and ſin. And, if ſo; then it muſt be natural to him accordingly to execute juſtice. If he be infinitely holy; why then he will reward holineſs, and puniſh ſin. If he have ſuch a love to holineſs, he will ſhew it by rewarding of it; and if he have ſuch an averſion to ſin, he will ſhew that: and how ſhould he ſhew his averſion to ſin, better than by his puniſhing of it? and his love to

[a] Exod. 15. 11.

holineſs,

holineſs, but by rewarding of it? *The righteous God loveth righteouſneſs*, and will reward it. So it is as plain and eaſy to infer, that ſeeing he hath an infinite averſion to ſin, he will puniſh iniquity. *The wicked ſhall not dwell with him: the ungodly ſhall not tarry in his ſight* [b]. He will *rain fire and brimſtone upon them* [c]. The ſcripture does abundantly declare God's hatred of ſin: it is *the abominable thing which he hates* [d]. *If the wicked turn not, God will whet his glittering ſword, and his hand will take hold on judgment; and he will render vengeance to them for their tranſgreſſions* [e]. So that nothing is more plain and evident, from the juſtice and holineſs of God, than that, as he hath an averſion to ſin, he will puniſh it, and not reward it.

Now if it were poſſible for men, in a ſtate of ſin, to enjoy the happineſs of heaven; this would be for God to act contrary to himſelf, contrary to his own nature, and to ſhew his love and complacency to thoſe perſons who are quite averſe to him; his enemies, and ſuch as remain in a ſtate of enmity. This were for him to abandon the rites of juſtice, and to overthrow his authority, as he is governour of the world. This would be to take away the difference betwixt good and evil; and would overturn, at once, the eſteem which we ought to

[b] Pſal. 5. 5.
[c] Pſal. 11. 6.
[d] Jer. 44. 4.
[e] Deut. 32. 41.

have

have of the divine perfections. And it is eaſy to ſee this would reflect as much upon his wiſdom, as upon his holineſs and juſtice. Where would be his wiſdom? For, ſeeing his way, in the government of the world, is according to the methods of wiſdom; we find rewards and puniſhments, threatnings and promiſes, are made uſe of by God as the great inſtruments of his government. But what would all theſe ſignify, if the wicked might enter into a ſtate of glory? If thoſe who are but hypocrites, like the Scribes and Phariſees, might *enter into the kingdom of heaven*, and perſons might be partakers of that bleſſedneſs, without having holineſs for the predominant principle in their ſouls; then where would be the wiſdom, as well as the juſtice, of the divine government? It were eaſy to enlarge upon this head; and to ſhew you the ſame thing from the veracity of God: but this would lead me too far. Beſides, the next thing we have to conſider, will farther ſhew this: that as it muſt be thus with reſpect to the divine nature; ſo,

2. It appears from the declaration of the divine will, that thoſe ſhall not enter heaven who are not truly righteous: God having ſo conſtituted and eſtabliſhed this matter, as to declare his mind aloud in his word about it. And who knows his deſigns, ſo well as himſelf? Will any man preſume on a title to heaven, and walk in

a ſtate of ſin, when God hath declared, in his word, that the wicked ſhall never enjoy that glory, and that *no unclean thing ſhall enter there* [f]; and when thoſe who live and *die in their ſins*, are expreſly declared to be excluded entrance into the kingdom of heaven; and when we are aſſured that they *ſhall have their portion in a place where the worm never dies, and where the fire ſhall never be quenched* [g]? How vain then is it for any to pretend he hath a title to glory, when God, who gives life and death, diſtributes rewards and puniſhments as he pleaſes, hath declared the contrary? His holy law expreſly awards *death as the wages of ſin* [h]: and death ſignifies eternal death, as well as temporal. He hath declared his hatred of the wicked; that *he will rain ſnares, fire and brimſtone, and an horrible tempeſt upon them*; and that *this ſhall be the portion of their cup* [i]: he hath declared, that *he is angry with the wicked every day* [k]: he hath declared, that *it is a terrible thing to fall into his hands* [l]; and that *none can ſtand before him when once he is angry*: that *tribulation, anguiſh, and wrath, are the portion of them that do evil* [m]: that *the righteous judgment of God is revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs* [n]. And this he hath

[f] Rev. 21. 27.
[g] Mark 9. 44.
[h] Rom. 6. 23.
[i] Pſal. 11. 6.
[k] Pſal 7. 11.
[l] Heb. 10. 31.
[m] Rom. 2. 9.
[n] *Chap.* 1. 17, 18.

declared

declared by terrible inſtances of his judgment, as well as by the ſanction of his law. He hath left ſtrange monuments in the world of his hatred againſt ſin. Death, in ſo many inſtances as there have been perſons in former generations, ſhews that ſin is an evil thing indeed: ſeeing death is the worſt of evils, except moral evil, which is the evil of ſin itſelf. The deſtruction of cities and nations; the dreadful monuments of divine vengeance in the ruin of the old world, in the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, with the inhabitants thereof, by fire from heaven; the calamities which have infeſted the earth ever ſince; the evils which attend mankind; the vanity and vexation of ſpirit; the diſeaſes, the pains, and torments, which men endure in their bodies; and the remorſe of conſcience that is ſometimes ſo intolerable to their minds; theſe all declare the ſeverity of God's righteous law, and that he hath an unalterable hatred to ſin.

3. Not only the divine law declares this, and God hath ſaid and conſtituted it, that puniſhment ſhall be the effect of ſin, and that thoſe ſhall not be happy, who have not a ſubſtantial holineſs and purity: but there is no proviſion made for the entrance of any unſanctfied perſons into the kingdom of heaven; no proviſion made in the goſpel, which is the method of grace, and reconciliation. Man indeed may ſay, that tho the law is ſevere, and denounces death as

the wages of ſin; yet *the gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord* [o]. It is very true: but God hath no where declared, that any unholy thing ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven: he hath no where declar'd that he will lay aſide his holineſs and juſtice, that he may diſplay his mercy. For, in the goſpel, *mercy and truth meet together; righteouſneſs and peace kiſs each other* [p]. God hath ſo ordered the diſpenſation of the goſpel of grace, that there ſhall be no infringment of his own perfections: there is nothing derogatory to the attributes of his juſtice, and holineſs, in the method of ſalvation. Nay, not only hath he ſo ordered the matter in the goſpel, that theſe attributes of his ſhould be ſecured; but they are more eminently declared than they were in any former diſpenſation: there is a plainer, a more open and explicit, and terrible denunciation of judgments againſt the wicked in the goſpel, than there was under the diſpenſation of the law. The puniſhments threatned there, were principally temporal evils: and tho there were ſome which reached the eternal ſtate, yet they were not ſo plainly declared, and ſo frequently denounced, as now under the goſpel. Who, that reads what our Saviour ſays of *a worm that never dies, and a fire that never ſhall be quenched* [q]; of a place, or ſtate, where there

[o] Rom. 6. 23.
[p] Pſal. 85. 10.
[q] Mark 9. 44.

is *weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth* [r]; who that conſiders what the apoſtles declare in their writings of *Chriſt's coming in flaming-fire to take vengeance upon his enemies* [s]; and of *that blackneſs of darkneſs which is reſerved for ever* [t] for the puniſhment of ſin; of that terrible day of the Lord, wherein he will *render unto every man according to his deeds* [u], and caſt thoſe into irretrievable miſery, *into the lake of fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death* [v], who remain in a ſtate of ſin: who, I ſay, can read theſe things, and pretend that the goſpel gives any countenance to vice; and that after all theſe terrible ſentences it ſhall be counted poſſible for men, with their ſins, *to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord* [w]. *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God* [x]; as our Saviour declares in this chapter. *Be not deceived, God will not be mocked: as a man ſoweth, ſo ſhall he reap* [y]. There is therefore no proviſion made in the goſpel to relieve thoſe who live and die in their ſins.

It is true, God is ſaid to *juſtify the ungodly* [z]: but the apoſtle himſelf ſufficiently explains what he means; *viz.* that God juſtifies thoſe who were formerly ungodly,

[r] Mat. 8. 12.
[s] 2 Theſſ. 1. 8.
[t] Jude 13.
[u] Rom. 2. 6.
[v] Rev. 21. 8.
[w] Heb. 12. 14.
[x] Mat. 5. 8.
[y] Gal. 6. 7.
[z] Rom. 5. 4.

and in a ſtate of ſin, previous to this ſtate of juſtification. But we muſt not conceive they are in an ungodly ſtate, and juſtified at the ſame time: for that is as contrary as light is to darkneſs. If we are in a vicious ſtate, and that which determines and governs our ſoul is a principle of vice, which is directly contrary to the divine nature and holy law of God; how can there be a reconciliation betwixt God and us, a reconciliation at the ſame time that we are perpetrating thoſe things which are evil in his ſight? Therefore that text muſt be underſtood after the ſame manner as the meſſage which Chriſt ſent to John: *Go, tell him*, ſays our Lord, *that the blind ſee; the lame walk; and the dead are raiſed*[a]. *The blind ſee*, &c. None are ſo fooliſh as to imagine that they ſaw while they were blind; or that they walked while they were, by lameneſs, unable to walk: but the plain meaning is, that whereas before they were blind, and could not ſee; lame, and could not walk; now they were healed by the miraculous power of our Saviour, and could ſee, and walk. So *the ungodly are juſtified:* they are not ungodly now they are in a juſtified ſtate; tho they were ungodly, they are now juſtified. *Such were ſome of you*, ſays the apoſtle to the Corinthians, after having enumerated ſome of the greateſt of ſinners:

[a] Mat. 11. 5.

but

but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the ſpirit of our God [b]. Our Lord Jeſus, who is the Mediator of the new covenant, never came to *ſave men* in their ſins, but *from their ſins. He ſhall be called Jeſus*, ſays the angel, *becauſe he ſhall ſave his people from their ſins* [c]. The whole œconomy of the goſpel aims at this: the precepts of our Saviour, the ſtrictneſs of the morals preſcribed in the goſpel, declare this: the extraordinary motives, the declarations which are made of the heavenly ſtate; the example of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who was *a lamb without ſpot and blemiſh* [d]; the patterns of the apoſtles, and their conſtant exhortations to the people; all declare, that there is nothing more contrary to the goſpel of the grace of God than ſin. The *grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, teacheth us to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts; and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent evil world* [e]. It was the very deſign of our Saviour's death, to *redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works* [f]. The effuſion of his blood was for this end. This was one great reaſon of it; to merit grace for us, by which we might be ſanctified.

[b] 1 Cor. 6. 11.
[c] Mat. 1. 21.
[d] 1 Pet. 1. 19.
[e] Titus 2. 12.
[f] *Ver.* 13, 14.

So that there is no proviſion made for any man's entrance into the kingdom of heaven without holineſs: not by the goſpel, as merciful a diſpenſation as it is. Therefore, if the law of God will not give us way no more than his attributes; nor the goſpel itſelf make us a way to heaven without holineſs; who, that lives in ſin, ſhall pretend to it? Nor is it to be imagined, that after this ſtate there will be any means afforded to make us holy: there is no goſpel, no mediation, no ſacrifice hereafter for ſin. Henceforth *there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries* [g]. *There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither we are going* [h]. Nor can the ſoul that is fixed in its ſtate, immediately upon leaving its body, be removed from it. It appears from the parable of the rich man, when he dies, he is repreſented as in a ſtate of torment: and, notwithſtanding all his deſires and intreaties, he is ſo far from being able to leave that place of torment, that he can obtain nothing to mitigate his ſorrows and miſeries; not *one drop of water to cool his tongue* [i]. There is no ſpace for repentance in the other world. And if perſons

[g] Heb. 10. 26, 27.
[h] Eccleſ. 9. 10.
[i] Luke 16. 24.

are

are not godly in this world; as it is impoſſible they ſhould enter into the kingdom of heaven in an ungodly ſtate, ſo there is no proviſion made that they ſhould ever be changed in the other world. Beſides: the mediatory kingdom of our Lord Jeſus, as that is a mediation to reconcile and make peace betwixt God and ſinners, is determined, *when he hath gathered his elect to himſelf from all the corners of the world* [k], and comes to judgment. There is no more mediation of reconciliation then: he *gives up the kingdom to his Father*, that is, his mediatory kingdom, on that account; as it is expreſſed in 1 Cor. 15. 24.

4. It will farther appear that it is impoſſible for a perſon who is not holy *to enter into the kingdom of God*, if we conſider what is meant by *entring into the kingdom of God*; which is, to be happy, and to be glorious. A wicked man, one who is in a ſtate of ſin, and ſo remains, muſt be altogether unfit for the ſociety of that place. Rational creatures are made for ſociety; and man cannot be happy without ſociety: and the happineſs of heaven principally conſiſts in ſociety with God; by having communion with him, having the manifeſtation of his favour, the intimations of his kindneſs. Society with our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, will likewiſe be a great part of the happineſs of

[k] Mat. 24. 31.

that ſtate: for, tho he is God, yet hath he human nature in the glorified ſtate; whereby we may be rendred more capable of intimate converſe with him, and of diſcerning the divine glory, as it ſhines in the face of the Son of God, who is alſo the ſon of man. The ſociety likewiſe of angels, and ſaints; how is it poſſible that a perſon who is ungodly, ſhould be happy in this ſociety? *How can two walk together, unleſs they are agreed*[1]? How can one who loves ſin and delights in it, be happy in communion with God, who hates and abhors it? This is a contradiction in itſelf. To be happy in the communion of God, muſt be to be happy in the contemplation of his perfections. But that contemplation would be an uneaſineſs, a trouble, a diſturbance, and a terrible wound to an unſanctified ſoul. If he were to have ſociety with God, to converſe with him, when he ſhould find him to be infinitely holy, to be juſt, to be true, and faithful, and naturally and neceſſarily to hate ſin, and at the ſame time find himſelf polluted by it; what diſturbance would this give him? Every creature loves himſelf, and hath a natural deſire to his own happineſs, and muſt have an averſion to that which is contrary to him. Therefore the ſinner hath an averſion to God, becauſe he is infinitely holy; he hath

[1] Amos 3. 3.

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an averſion to God's juſtice and holineſs, becauſe he is afraid of being puniſhed: and he would eſcape the puniſhment and righteous judgment which God hath awarded to ſin. Is it poſſible he ſhould delight in the ſociety of ſaints and angels, and find a happineſs therein, who are contrary to him? The wicked in this world are irritated, ſo as to perſecute the ſaints. And if they are in the company of the righteous, eſpecially if they are exerciſing acts of piety and holineſs; their converſation is ſuch a reproach to them, that it is a wound upon their minds. As the *righteous ſouls* of the godly *are vexed with the filthy communication of the wicked* [m]; ſo the unrighteous ſouls of the wicked are vexed at the holineſs they ſee in the righteous, when thoſe acts of holineſs do ſo manifeſtly reproach their converſation, and are ſo many reproofs and rebukes to them for walking after another manner.

Beſides ſome other reaſons which determine the wicked to hate the righteous, it is enough if we conſider that there muſt be an agreement in diſpoſition and temper of mind, or elſe two perſons can never be happy in the ſociety of each other: and a moral difference is the greateſt that can be betwixt two perſons. The difference betwixt ſin and holineſs, is the moſt diſtin-

[m] 2 Pet. 2. 7.

guiſhing difference that can be. If there be true piety and holineſs, men may have ſome comfort in converſing with one another, notwithſtanding their diſagreeableneſs in ſome other reſpects: but when there is a moral difference between them, the one being holy, and the other unholy; how can there be an agreeable converſation? How then ſhall the ungodly *enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and after having paſſed their life in a courſe of ſin here, enter into a ſtate of ſo much holineſs hereafter? How can they be happy in the ſociety of thoſe who are of a quite contrary temper and genius; who love that which they hate, and hate that which they love? It is impoſſible, a ſociety ſo formed, ſhould be happy in one another.

5. This farther appears from the employment, and buſineſs of heaven. Perſons who *enter into the kingdom of heaven*, do not enter there to enjoy an Epicurean ſenſual pleaſure; to ſpend an eternity in a ſupine negligence, lazineſs, and inactivity: no; there is an employment, an uninterrupted employment and buſineſs in the ſtate of glory; and, without this, the happineſs could not be ſo great as it is repreſented. There will be nothing in that world to tire or diſcompoſe the bleſſed inhabitants: they will be never *weary of well-doing*: there will be nothing to flag their ſpirits, nothing to render their ſouls uneaſy; no infirmity of body; no want of recruits of nature by ſleep,

ſleep, or any other recreation: there will be no temptation; no wandring of the fancy to diſconcert their thoughts, or interrupt them in thoſe acts of piety about which they ſhall be conſtantly employed to eternity. Their buſineſs will be, as is repreſented in the Revelation, to worſhip God, to praiſe him, and adore him. *His ſervants ſhall ſerve him:* and it is ſaid, they ſhall *ſerve him day and night* [n]; that is, continually: for, *there ſhall be no night there* [o]. There will be an uninterrupted ſervice to the divine majeſty, and a conſtant aſcription of honour, and glory, and dominion, to him for ever: *They reſt not day and night, ſaying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.*

Now is it poſſible that the wicked ſhould be made fit for ſuch an employment as this is, while they remain in a ſtate of ſin? To enter into heaven with a wicked frame of mind, is to enter in ſuch a frame as is an averſion to the employment of heaven. And if the thing could be accounted poſſible, where would the happineſs of this be; to be always employed in that to which they bear an averſion? It would be to ſuppoſe that they could be made happy in the performance of that wherein every act is hypocritical; every part of their employment diſagreeable to them. How do they hate

[n] Rev. 7. 15. | [o] *Chap.* 21. 25.

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the worſhip of God now; and how uneaſy are they to attend, but a little time, the places where others ſerve God? They ſay, with thoſe ſpoken of by the prophet Malachi, that *it is vain to ſerve God*, and that *there is no profit in keeping his ordinances* [p]. They take no pleaſure in ſerving of him: they have a guſt for ſenſual delights; but they *delight not in the knowledge of* God's *ways*, or in the attendance of his ſervices. And if they are ſo uneaſy now, in being where an hour or two is ſpent in the worſhip of God; how uneaſy would they be, if they were to paſs an eternity in that ſociety, which is always employed in worſhiping and praiſing him, and aſcribing glory to his name?

6. As they are uncapable of the happineſs of heaven; ſo they are uncapable of the employment alſo. It is an intellectual happineſs, a mental happineſs; a happineſs which conſiſts in the knowledge of truth, and in the love of holineſs, and in the ſenſe of God's favour. Now there is nothing more diametrically oppoſite to a wicked temper of mind than ſuch a happineſs as this. The wicked have moſt eaſe and happineſs, if I may ſo expreſs it, when they are moſt in error, moſt ſtupid, and when their minds are moſt in the dark; that is, when their conſciences are ſeared, then they enjoy their

[p] Mal. 3. 14.

ſenſual delights, with the greateſt guſt: and this is the moſt dangerous condition they can be in, on this ſide of deſtruction. How can thoſe who have their happineſs in ſenſual delights, which they cannot enjoy to any tolerable degree till they have perverted their minds with prejudices; how can they then enjoy that kind of happineſs which is the only happineſs of heaven? Can they who delight ſo much in ſenſuality, ever account it a happineſs to have their minds irradiated with the knowledge of God, whoſe perfections are ſo contrary to their diſpoſitions; as hath been ſhewn before? Can they be capable of the joy of a good conſcience, who have an evil one? If they even now reflect upon themſelves juſtly, and ſee the ſtate of their own ſouls; this will naturally give them abundance of trouble and regret. And if ſo; how would this diſtreſs increaſe upon them in that world? For, the ſtate of heaven being a ſtate of intellectual light, it will repreſent to every man, as in a glaſs, the condition of his own ſoul. And this would give the wicked terrible remorſe and trouble, if we could ſuppoſe they were placed in that ſituation: for, being in that light, they muſt have the manifeſtation of the ſtate of their own ſouls; and this being evil, would make them more miſerable. The ſaints who enjoy eternal glory and felicity, as they are in the divine light, and can ſee the ſtate of their

their conſciences perfectly well, and have in themſelves a conſcience certainly aſſured that they are freed from all the ſtains of ſin, muſt needs poſſeſs an unſpeakable joy. A rational creature reflecting upon itſelf, and ſeeing itſelf transformed into the image of God, and placed in an advantageous ſituation of light and holineſs, muſt needs be happy. But the mind which is not diſpoſed hereto, muſt be quite otherwiſe, if we ſuppoſe it in that ſituation, and inveſted with knowledge ſufficient to make a right judgment of itſelf. An ungodly ſoul would ſee its own deformity, and would be frighted at itſelf, and be full of remorſe and terror: ſo impoſſible is it for one who is ungodly, to be capable of that kind of happineſs which is to be enjoyed in heaven. It is an intellectual rational happineſs, conſiſting in the joy of a good conſcience; in the contemplation of the divine perfections; in the ſenſe of the love of God, and making a return of praiſe to him. But how can we love God, who love ſin, which is infinitely oppoſite to him; or be loved of him, who live in a ſtate of ſin; when God hath declared that he abhors the wicked, and that he is *angry with them every day* [q]; and when ſin is as contrary to his nature as darkneſs is to light?

[q] Pſal. 7. 11.

Thus

Thus have I ſhewn you that it is impoſſible for one who is not holy to *enter into the kingdom of heaven:* that it is neceſſary, if a man would enter into that kingdom, for him to have a true, ſincere, and ſubſtantial inherent holineſs: that the very nature of God demonſtrates this, and the declarations of his will in his ſacred word: it is ſo by the conſtitution of his law; and there is no proviſion made in the goſpel for the entrance of a wicked perſon into heaven; nor is there any proviſion made in the other world to change thoſe who live and die in their ſins. I have ſhewn that for an ungodly perſon to *enter into the kingdom of heaven* is impoſſible, becauſe he is unfit for the company, and for the employment of that place, and uncapable of that kind of happineſs it affords: for, his happineſs lies in ſenſuality, in the pleaſures of ſin, in earthly carnal objects, in the delight of his ſenſes; and is not a rational internal happineſs, the happineſs of the mind and conſcience, which is the greateſt joy of heaven: ſuch a happineſs he is utterly incapable of, while he is in a ſtate of ſin.

If any one after this ſhould aſk me, how was it then with that eminent inſtance in the New Teſtament of one who was promoted to enter into paradiſe with Chriſt, tho he had lived a vicious life, the thief upon the croſs; to whom our Lord Jeſus Chriſt promiſed, on the day of his cru-

cifixion, that *that day he ſhould be with him in paradiſe*[r]: I would anſwer, it is true, that that perſon had lived a vicious life; but it is as true that he was ſanctified before he entred heaven. There is no doubt to be made but he was *that day in paradiſe*, in a ſtate of bliſs and glory; but, before he entred into it, he was converted by the grace of God, changed, and renewed. We do not deny but a perſon may be changed, and ſanctified, a little before his death; as was the caſe of this eminent inſtance: but it is certain, that it is a very dangerous thing for any perſons to defer their converſion upon a preſumption that they ſhall be changed then. It is indeed a poſſible thing; but we do not find frequent inſtances of it in ſcripture. There is, we ſee, ſuch a thing recorded, that no true penitent might deſpair: but you find not ſuch another inſtance as this is; that none might vainly preſume, and think it a common caſe, when, in reality, it is a ſpecial one. Chriſt, at this time, would ſhew an extraordinary proof of his love and tenderneſs to poor ſinners; and was pleaſed to convert a very wicked perſon at the laſt hour. Now ſhall any one, becauſe of this extraordinary inſtance at an extraordinary time, preſume he ſhall fare after the ſame manner; when it is evident, that ſo far are people generally from being

[r] Luke 23. 43.

converted

converted when they come to die, that they are ſtupid, and their diſtemper renders them incapable of minding the great buſineſs of their ſouls? And it is ſo far from being a truth that perſons are commonly converted when they come to their death-bed, that there are few converted, if they defer it to the laſt part of their lives; few inſtances of perſons in old age who ever turned to God: how unlikely is it then, that thoſe who have lived a life of ſin, till they juſt come to the brink of the grave, ſhould enjoy ſuch an advantage?

This inſtance, therefore, does not ſhock the truth we have been eſtabliſhing; that no unholy perſon can *enter into the kingdom of heaven:* for this thief was made holy before he came there. And it is an eaſy matter to give you ſome account of his good works. He ſerved God before he went out of the world: he gave an open teſtimony to the world of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he was an innocent perſon, and died wrongfully, when there were ſuch multitudes who denied him. There was a diſcovery of his fidelity, and change of his mind, in that he owned Chriſt to be the true Meſſias: there was a proof of his faith in theſe words; *Lord! remember me when thou comeſt into thy kingdom* [f]. Here was faith in the true Meſſias: here was prayer

[f] Luke 23. 42.

to

to him for pardoning grace and mercy; and for an inheritance in glory. And to this may be added, that he diſcovered his faithfulneſs in reproving the other thief who was crucified with him: I ſay, faithfulneſs in reproving of him. He reproved him becauſe he reviled Chriſt, as well as the reſt of the multitude. Here was love to Chriſt in this, that he could not bear to hear him affronted, even in the midſt of his torments. Here was repentance. *We ſuffer juſtly*, ſays he; *receiving the reward of our ſins: but this perſon hath done nothing amiſs* [s]. Here was ſubmiſſion to the hand of God; and an acknowledgment that he was juſt in expoſing him to that infamous and painful puniſhment. You ſee here was a great diſcovery of grace in this perſon: ſo that he was truly ſanctified before he entered heaven. But I need inſiſt no longer upon this matter; which is ſo clear, that methinks every one who attends to it, will eaſily be convinced, from the nature of the thing, as well as from the declarations of the divine word, that there is no *entring into the kingdom of heaven* without having a real, ſincere, ſubſtantial, and true holineſs. Let me make a few reflections, and ſo conclude.

1. If there be no *entrance into the kingdom of heaven* without holineſs, for the various reaſons which you have heard; then this

[s] Luke 23. 41.

ſhews

ſhews how mightily thoſe perſons are miſtaken, who imagine men can be in a ſtate of ſalvation, in a ſtate of juſtification, or reconciliation, and yet remain ungodly, in a ſtate of ſin. This is to reconcile contradictions; things which are moſt oppoſite, as oppoſite as light and darkneſs. If it is impoſſible for any one to enter heaven without being holy, and that ſin is ſo contrary to the nature of God, that he abhors and *hates the workers of iniquity* [t], ſuch as are in that condition; then there is no juſtified ſtate, no ſtate of peace and reconciliation without holineſs. Juſtification and ſanctification muſt go together, in regard of the time. It cannot be true of any perſon that he is ſanctified, unleſs he be juſtified; or of any perſon that he is juſtified, unleſs he be ſanctified. If perſons could be in a ſtate of juſtification without being ſanctified, then it would appear that God had not ſuch an averſion to ſin; for then the ſinner, in his ſins, might have acceptance with God, and communion with him in heaven in like manner: but the one is as falſe, and abſurd, as the other. If we cannot *enter into the kingdom of heaven* for thoſe reaſons you have heard, without being holy; there is no enjoying communion with God in a ſtate of grace; no being in a ſtate of reconciliation without this change. There is no *being in Chriſt* without

[t] Pſal. 5. 5.

being a new creature [u]: this is part of the work of the ſpirit of God; and what was merited by our Redeemer, that we ſhould be redeemed from our ſins. It's true, there is none in this world without ſin; for we are all imperfect: but every one who is truly a chriſtian, hath grace reigning in his ſoul; this is the chief principle that governs him.

2. If there is no entring heaven without holineſs; then this ſhews the excellency of holineſs and purity; as it ſhews, on the other hand, the deformity of ſin. How well would it be for us, if we could always bear in our minds juſt notions of ſin and holineſs? how uncapable ſin renders us of being happy; how it ſets God againſt us; how oppoſite it is to the divine Being, as he is a God of righteouſneſs and holineſs, a God of wiſdom and order? There is nothing ſo loathſome, nothing ſo odious in the world as ſin; nothing ſo beautiful, and excellent, as holineſs. It is holineſs that renders us ſo like God, and capable of enjoying him, both in a ſtate of grace and glory. It is holineſs that is the greateſt perfection of the divine Being; and the greateſt perfection of any rational being. God is ſaid to be *glorious in holineſs* [v]: and it is holineſs that ſets the chiefeſt beauty and comelineſs upon creatures. Alas! what are

[u] 2 Cor. 5. 17. | [v] Exod. 15. 11.

all

all external appearances and qualifications; what is all the honour and grandeur in the world, great places, abundance of wealth, rich and noble attire, *&c.* what are theſe, to ſet off rational creatures? It is the beauty of the mind that recommends us to God, and renders us amiable in his eyes: and thoſe perſons who are moſt holy, are the moſt truly honourable. Theſe have the greateſt beauty; theſe have the greateſt luſtre; theſe reſemble the ſociety above; theſe are like God himſelf, according to their degree. Theſe bear his image; and therefore there is a much greater glory and reſplendency upon them than upon other creatures. Thoſe who have the greateſt intellectual light in this world, who are great philoſophers, or have abundance of eloquence to expreſs their minds, and charm thoſe that hear them; they are odious in the ſight of God, if they delight not in holineſs and purity. Theſe, if they have not the ſtamp of the divine image, are ſo much the more like the devils, and evil ſpirits: who know much, but at the ſame time are deſtitute of all purity; are full of malice, and all iniquity. By how much the more knowledge a man hath, if he be deformed with vice, by ſo much the more he is capable of doing miſchief: and his puniſhment will be proportionably aggravated. The beſt things corrupted, turn into the worſt.

Let us therefore get our minds duly impreſſed with a right ſenſe of holineſs, and ſin. Let us conſider that holineſs is the greateſt beauty, the greateſt honour, the greateſt treaſure, the greateſt excellency of a rational creature. Let us conſider what reflections it will raiſe in our minds here; what joy, and what ſerenity, in a good conſcience: and conſider what happineſs is treaſured up for thoſe who are truly holy, in the world to come; the enjoyment of God, communion with him, and with our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and communion with angels and ſaints, after the moſt intimate manner. This will be the reward of the righteous.

3. If thoſe who are not holy, *ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*; this ſhould put us upon examining ourſelves: for it is a moſt important point. Tho you have ever ſo much knowledge; tho you can talk plainly and clearly of the doctrine of the chriſtian religion, and defend the main points thereof with a great deal of ſkill and judgment; what will all this ſignify, if you are not holy? If you are not holy, your portion will be *where there is weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth* [w]. Nay, *tho you give all your goods to feed the poor, and your body to be burned* [x]; if you have not internal purity and ſincerity in religion; if

[w] Mat. 13. 42. | [x] 1 Cor. 13. 3.

you

you are not willing to obey every precept, and to mortify every luſt, and will only pick and chooſe what commands you like; *your righteouſneſs* is like that of *the Scribes and Phariſees:* and you will never *enter into the kingdom of heaven* after this manner. For, tho we cannot merit heaven by our righteouſneſs; yet it is neceſſary by the divine conſtitution, and the nature of the thing, that we ſhould be holy, or elſe we cannot be happy.

Let us therefore conſider the holy and extenſive nature of the divine law, and the ſtrict precepts of the goſpel; and make it our buſineſs, in good earneſt, to be *holy in all manner of converſation* [y]; *to preſent our bodies a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reaſonable ſervice* [z]. Let us not think it a ſmall matter to ſin againſt God, to wound our own conſciences, and to expoſe ourſelves to eternal vengeance. Let us not deſpiſe any one duty, by ſaying it is ſmall; or neglect any duty, by ſaying it is difficult to be performed, *there is a lion in the way, we ſhall be ſlain in the ſtreets* [a]. But let us conſider, that *ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads to life, and few there be which find it* [b]: conſider, that we muſt have *a more excellent righteouſneſs than that of the Scribes and Phariſees,* or we *cannot enter into*

[y] 1 Pet. 1. 15.
[z] Rom. 12. 1.
[a] Prov. 26. 13.
[b] Mat. 7. 14.

the kingdom of God. Conſider how theſe people were applauded for their reputed piety: and if theſe could not enter into heaven, let us take care that we do not deceive ourſelves. We may deceive others, by a ſpecious pretence to religion: but *God will not be mocked*; for, *whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap* [c]. Wherever there is a pretence of religion, look to it that there be great piety towards God, temperance, and chaſtity towards ourſelves, and righteouſneſs towards men. The doctrine of our text ſhews us, that religion is a thing which requires greater care and concern than moſt people imagine. Religion muſt run thro' the whole courſe of our lives: for, *if our righteouſneſs does not exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

4. This ſhews what reaſon we have to attend to the duties of religion, in a particular manner; and to ſeek of God that grace, which alone can make us happy. What a degenerate creature is man; prone to do evil, and that continually! *The heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked; who can know it* [d]? *Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? Then may they who are accuſtomed to do evil, learn to do well* [e]. And yet we muſt abandon our ſins, and be holy; or elſe we *cannot enter*

[c] Gal. 6. 7.
[d] Jer. 17. 9.
[e] *Chap.* 13. 23.

into

into the kingdom of heaven. What need then have we of the divine aſſiſtance? We muſt apply ourſelves to grace; for we can do nothing of ourſelves, but it's God who doth all things for us. When we conſider the corruption of our nature, and the multitude of ſenſual objects which tempt us; when we conſider that *we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood* only, *but againſt principalities and powers* [f], and evil ſpirits have a ſtrange acceſs to our ſouls, to corrupt our thoughts; we have reaſon to cry out, *Wretched that we are! who ſhall deliver us from this body of death* [g]? So corrupted and polluted are we by nature! *ſold under ſin* [h], and *led captive by the devil at his will* [i]. We cannot *enter into heaven* without being holy. And oh! what deſpair would enſue upon this, if God had not given *exceeding great and precious promiſes to help our infirmities* [k]; if our Lord Jeſus Chriſt had not merited grace for us by the effuſion of his blood, and promiſed to ſend his ſpirit to ſanctify our minds? How ſhould we value thoſe occaſions wherein theſe bleſſings are conveyed to us? How ſhould we value the ſacred worſhip of God, both in publick and private? How earneſt, and how importunate ſhould we be in our prayers? How diligent in our attendance upon the word, which is the great inſtru-

[f] Eph. 6. 12.
[g] Rom. 7. 24.
[h] *Ver.* 14.
[i] 2 Tim. 2. 26.
[k] 2 Pet. 1. 4.

ment of ſanctification? How willing to employ all opportunities which occur to us, for the advancement of ſo good a work upon our ſouls? Let us wait at the altar of God, at the poſts of wiſdom's door; and earneſtly implore that God would make *us holy in all manner of converſation* [l]; that *ſo an abundant entrance may be given us into the everlaſting kiugdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt* [m].

5. What an encouragement is this to holineſs and purity, ſeeing happineſs will be the conſequence of it? For, as *no unclean perſon ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven* [n]; ſo it is in this expreſſion intimated, that thoſe who are holy, ſhall enter there. And this is plainly affirm'd in other paſſages of ſcripture. Thus, Rev. 22. 14. *Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in thro' the gates into the city.* i. e. bleſſed are they who are truly holy, who are conform'd to the image of God here; for they ſhall be made happy hereafter. And how great is the happineſs to be enjoy'd then? What an improvement of their minds, and what a glorification of their bodies; what an eternity of delight without any ceſſation or interruption of it; what *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*; what *joy of a good conſcience*; what comfortable reflections upon paſt mercies;

[l] 1 Pet. 1. 15.
[m] 2 Pet. 1. 11.
[n] Rev. 21. 27.

and

and what a glorious view when the ſcene of providence ſhall be opened, and the divine perfections ſhine brightly in the face of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? What a happy ſociety, to have communion with? even God himſelf, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, after an intimate and uninterrupted manner! How great will be our happineſs, when there ſhall be no ſin to draw a cloud between God and us; when there ſhall be *no ſorrow at all* to diſconcert our minds; no vain thoughts to hinder our views of the divine perfections? What a happy enjoyment of the bleſſed ſociety into which no ſin ſhall enter; where no ſigh or groan ſhall be heard; where there ſhall be no complaint? For, as *they ſhall ſin no more*; ſo *they ſhall ſorrow no more*, who are advanced to that ſtate. What a happineſs in the mind; what a happineſs in the ſoul of man; a rational and intellectual happineſs! What extended capacities will then be given for the reception of that joy and happineſs; and what impreſſions of glory from the immediate preſence of God, when the ſaints *ſhall ſee him and be like him* [o]? How happy will they be, who *ſhall enter into the kingdom of God?* But, *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord* [p]. What an encouragement therefore is here to be *ſtedfaſt, and immoveable, always abounding*

[o] 1 John 3. 2. | [p] Heb. 12. 14.

in

in the work of the Lord; knowing that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord [q]*? For in due time we ſhall reap, if we faint not* [r].

[q] 1 Cor. 15. 58. | [r] Gal. 6. 9.

SERMON VIII.

The unreaſonableneſs and folly of an indecent behaviour under afflictions conſidered.

Preach'd at

JOINERS-HALL, March 24, 1705-6.

PROV. iii. 11, 12.

My ſon, deſpiſe not the chaſtening of the Lord: neither be weary of his correction. For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth; even as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

SUCH is the ignorance and weakneſs even of the beſt of men, that they find no ſmall difficulty in improving thoſe diſpenſations of God's providence, which are moſt adapted to their intereſt. Afflictions are deſigned of God for our

our profit; and it is the moſt uſual method by which he refines and purifies the ſouls of men: yet how prone are good men to behave themſelves indecently under them; either by not reverencing the authority of the divine hand that afflicts them, or not conſidering the love, the compaſſion, and tenderneſs, which is expreſſed by the affliction? Therefore the wiſe man in our text cautions us againſt ſuch a behaviour, from the reſpect that we owe to God, and the confidence we ought to have not only in his wiſdom, but in the goodneſs of his deſigns towards us: in telling us that we are not, on the one hand, to *deſpiſe his chaſtenings*, nor, on the other, to *be weary of his correction*; becauſe he hath the love, as well as the authority of a father; and corrects us, if we are his people, for this very reaſon, that he may expreſs his love, and ſhew that he delights in us.

I need not refer you to the context, to ſhew the deſign of the words of the wiſe man: for this book of Proverbs is made up of various maxims of wiſdom and piety, which are not dependent one upon another in the delivery of them. But we may take a little notice that Solomon addreſſes himſelf here, and on other occaſions in this book, to thoſe to whom he ſpeaks, as to children: he makes uſe of this appellation, *my ſon*, not only in the words of our text, but in many other places. As in the beginning

ginning of the 2d, 3d, 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Proverbs. *My ſon, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee,* &c. *My ſon, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments. My ſon, attend unto my wiſdom,* &c. and in the 4th chapter: *Hear, ye children, the inſtruction of a father; and attend to know underſtanding. For I give you good doctrine: forſake you not my law. For I was my father's ſon, tender and only-beloved in the ſight of my mother.*

From hence it may be ſuppoſed that Solomon wrote many of theſe proverbs, which contained excellent morals, and politicks, for the uſe of his own family. And thus he may be ſuppoſed to ſpeak to his own children; particularly in the words I laſt read to you: *Hear, ye children, the inſtruction of a father; and attend to know underſtanding,* &c. *For I was my father's ſon, tender and only-beloved in the ſight of my mother. He taught me alſo; and ſaid unto me, let thine heart retain my words, keep my commandments, and live* [f]. As a prince alſo; as the father of his country, he might well ſpeak in the ſame terms to his people. And as philoſophers commonly taught their diſciples after the ſame manner; I mean, uſing the ſame expreſſions, when they gave them the precepts of wiſdom and

[f] Prov. 4. 1——4.

morality: ſo, conſidering Solomon's character as *the wiſeſt of men*, he may ſeem to ſpeak to others as his diſciples; to ſuch as were willing to attend unto his wiſdom. But in a ſpecial manner, as he was a prophet, and taught the precepts of the true religion, and in ſpeaking perſonated God; *a greater than Solomon is here* [s]. And we have reaſon to ſuppoſe, from what the apoſtle Paul ſays, that God himſelf ſpeaks here to good men, calling them *his children.* For the apoſtle, in citing this text, ſo interprets it; Heb. 12. 5—8. *Ye have forgotten the exhortation, which ſpeaketh unto you as unto children; My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth; and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth. If ye endure chaſtening, God dealeth with you as with ſons: for what ſon is he whom the father chaſteneth not? But if ye be without chaſtiſement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye baſtards, and not ſons.* So that theſe words do at leaſt chiefly regard the righteous, thoſe whom God diſdains not to call *his own children.* In the text we have two parts.

Firſt, A caution againſt an indecent behaviour under affliction; in theſe terms:

[s] Luke 11. 31.

My

My ſon, deſpiſe not the chaſtening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction.

Secondly, The argument by which this caution is inforced: *For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth; even as a father the ſon in whom he delighteth.*

Firſt, There is a caution given againſt an uncomely behaviour under affliction. And here it may be proper for us,

I. To conſider affliction under the notion of a *chaſtening,* or *correction*; a *chaſtening of the Lord,* and *his correction.* And then,

II. To conſider what are the indecencies of carriage the wiſe man ſpeaks againſt, under the terms of *deſpiſing,* and *being weary of the chaſtening and correction of God.*

I. As to the deſcription which is given of affliction. As it regards the righteous, it is called a *chaſtening* or *correction.* Not but that the ſame term is ſometimes uſed in the holy ſcripture with reference to the wicked. So the pſalmiſt, Pſal. 39. 11. *When thou with rebukes correcteſt man for his iniquity, thou makeſt his beauty to conſume away like a moth.* So ſpeaking of man indifferently; Pſal. 94. 10. *He that chaſtiſeth the heathen, ſhall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, ſhall not he know?* But the notion of *chaſtening* or *correction,* is ſuch a kind of affliction

as

as is not deſigned for the deſtruction, but the reformation of the chaſtiſed perſons: tho indeed there is one text where it ſeems to be uſed ſomewhat otherwiſe. Thus, Iſa. 53. 5. where the ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt are enumerated: *the chaſtiſement of our peace*, it is ſaid, *was upon him*; and that, *with his ſtripes we are healed.* If that term is there deſigned to repreſent our Lord's being put to death, the word is uſed in a ſenſe that is not ſo common. But it is probable that his ſcourging is there particularly meant; as appears by what immediately follows. *The chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him: and with his ſtripes we are healed. With his ſtripes:* for ſcourging among the Jews, and other nations, was termed and accounted a puniſhment for correction, in order to work a reformation. So that if we interpret the words preciſely to ſignify our Lord's ſcourging; then the notion we gave before of chaſtiſement, ſtill continues the ſame.

It hath been uſed ſometimes to expreſs the puniſhment inflicted by lords upon their vaſſals; ſometimes by magiſtrates upon their ſubjects; and ſometimes by parents upon their children. Thus when lords puniſh their vaſſals, they are not to be ſuppoſed to deſign the deſtruction of them; becauſe of the advantage they reap from their ſervice. And when magiſtrates puniſh their ſubjects, except in capital caſes, one conſiderable end

is

is for the reformation of the perſon; tho the greateſt deſign is for the good of the community. Then the inflicting of puniſhments by parents upon their children, muſt certainly be for their reformation; to turn them from any vicious courſe. According to the illuſtration taken from the cloſe of our text, it is a great inſtance of a parent's love. For how much the more regularly the parent loves the child, by ſo much the more careful he will be to correct him for his vices.

In our text, you ſee the alluſion is taken from the correction uſed by a father to his diſobedient child. And indeed this moſt reſembles the afflictive meaſures which God uſes for the reformation of his children. If we take it in a large ſenſe, as he is ſaid to *correct the heathen*, as he is the great Lord and governour of the world, the ſovereign of the univerſe; he chaſtiſes men in general. But then he does it rather as a magiſtrate, than as a parent. When a lord corrects his vaſſals, it is not ſo much for their good as for his own advantage. And when a magiſtrate corrects his ſubjects, it is not ſo much for the advantage of the perſons corrected, as it is for the benefit of the community. But when a father corrects his ſon, his deſign is terminated upon his advantage: he corrects him, becauſe he loves him; and becauſe he loves him, he deſigns to make him better by it. When

God corrects the wicked as a governour, ſometimes there is much greater advantage to the community, than to the perſon corrected. The *wicked will do wickedly* [t]: they remain obſtinate and impenitent frequently, notwithſtanding the puniſhments inflicted upon them. But then there are others who *hear and fear* [u], and reform themſelves, by ſeeing the puniſhments which are inflicted upon thoſe who behave themſelves obſtinately and impenitently under them. It is true, there is a deſign of good when God corrects, even as a governour; a deſign of good to the perſon corrected. Thus he himſelf has ſufficiently declared, Ezek. 33. 11. *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I delight not in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways.* He does not deſtroy them at once as they deſerve, and plunge them into everlaſting miſery in a moment; but he waits to be gracious, and inflicts leſſer puniſhments for their ſins, in order to bring them to repentance. And thus a father corrects his rebellious children, in order to reclaim them. But by *chaſtiſement* in our text, we are to underſtand the corrections which God makes uſe of for the reformation of thoſe whom he is pleaſed, in a peculiar ſenſe, to call *his children*; the afflictions with which he exerciſes good men:

[t] Dan. 12. 10. | [u] Deut. 13. 11.

tho

tho the ſcripture, in other places, as I have obſerved, ſpeaks more largely of correction.

God is conſidered, in our text, as a father who loves his children, and delights in them. There is indeed a love of good-will, even to the wicked: but there is a love of delight and complacency, which God expreſſes to his own people. *He delights in them:* which cannot be applied to the wicked. Therefore we ſhall, in a ſpecial manner, conſider his correction with reference to his own people. He *ſpeaks to them here as to children*; as the apoſtle tells us: *My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art rebuked of him* [v]. So that whatever puniſhments are inflicted upon good men in this world, they are all to be interpreted as the corrections of a father. I do not ſcruple to call them puniſhments, and to ſay, that God is ſometimes angry with his people; how much ſoever ſome are afraid of theſe terms. It is true, that God's deſign in correcting his people, is not thereby to ſatisfy his juſtice: but yet, all the evils and miſeries which we are under in this world, may very well be termed puniſhments. When God ſpeaks to his own people, he ſays: *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I puniſh you for all your iniquities* [w].

[v] Heb. 12. 5. | [w] Amos 3. 2.

And God is ſaid to have been *angry with Moſes.* He was *angry with Moſes for the people's-ſakes: ſo that he ſpake unadviſedly with his lips* [x]. Nor do I ſcruple to ſay, that whenever God inflicts any puniſhment upon his people, it is for their ſins.

Some men nicely diſtinguiſh between the corrections of the divine hand. They ſay God ſometimes inflicts troubles upon his people only for the exerciſe of their graces, and not at all on the account of their ſins. But it would be very hard to prove this, unleſs we could find people ſo good and perfect, that they were clear from ſin. It is certain there had never been any miſery in the world, nor puniſhment, if it had not been for ſin: and as ſoon as any good man hath a releaſe from ſin, he ſhall have an immunity from ſorrow and trouble. Beſides, there is no ground for the diſtinction. If we conſider God ſometimes only as afflicting men for the exerciſe of their grace, it will appear to involve thus much in it; that it is for the puniſhment of their ſins. For, God does not try the graces of his people becauſe he would know to what a degree of grace they are arriv'd; he knows that perfectly well: but, when he tries them, there is an alluſion to putting metal into the fire for purification. This is his deſign; *to chaſtiſe us for our profit, that*

[x] Pſal. 106. 32, 33.

we

we might be made partakers of his holineſs [y]. Now if it be to purify us, to advance the graces in our minds, that is, to make us love him more, truſt in him more, be more ſubmiſſive to his divine will, patient and meek under ſufferings; then this is to purify us from contrary vices, to purge us from unbelief and diffidence, from our pride and obſtinacy, from our impatience, and other vices, which are contrary to the virtues and graces which are ſaid to be tried.

And no greater inſtance can be given concerning what I am ſpeaking of, than that of Job, and the apoſtle Paul. Job is ſpoken of as *a perfect man*; a man of great integrity, piety, and ſincerity: yet God was pleaſed to afflict him after an extraordinary manner. But it is certain this was for the purifying of his ſoul from ſin; and this was the good effect of his affliction. Therefore we find, at the cloſe of his troubles, he humbled himſelf before God, and expreſſed himſelf after this manner: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye ſeeth thee; wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes* [z]. The deſign of theſe afflictions was to work Job up to a high degree of repentance; and, if he was to be brought to repentance, this ſuppoſes there was ſin to be purged from him. As for the afflictions of the apoſtle

[y] Heb. 12. 10. | [z] Job 42. 5, 6.

Paul; his indeed were great and numerous; and he describes them after a pathetick manner, upon several occasions. But when he was extremely tempted, as he had occasion to recur to the grace of God, and had this answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee*; so he declared *he would rejoice in his infirmities and temptations, because when he was weak, then he was strong* [a]. He found there was an improvement of grace, and mortification of sin, when he was weak, and most humble: then he gain'd the greatest strength and advantage in the christian graces and virtues. And you find there is none speaks more humbly of himself than this apostle. Therefore we must conclude, that whatever corrections God is pleased to make use of, they are all design'd to reclaim us from sin. *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged: and this is all the fruit to take away his sin* [b]. I proceed,

II. To consider what is meant by *despising the chastening of the Lord*; and what by *being weary of his correction.* These terms, every one may easily observe, do comprehend various degrees. There is no good man who intirely *despises the chastening of the Lord,* or is intirely *weary of his correction.* Notwithstanding the thoughtlessness and inconsideration of good men sometimes

[a] 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10. [b] Isa. 27. 9.

when

when they are corrected, they do not deliberately contemn and *deſpiſe God's correction.* And however ſometimes they may be ready to diſtruſt him, and complain of afflictions when they ſeem very ſevere; yet they are not ſo *weary of his correction* as to renounce their obedience, as the wicked do: I mean, not to the ſame degree. But it is good for us to number the ſeveral degrees wherein we may be ſaid to offend in theſe points; in *deſpiſing the chaſtening of the Lord*, or being offended at his rebukes. For the firſt of theſe, the caution ſeems to be directed againſt a ſtupid and negligent behaviour; and the latter, againſt an impatient and murmuring frame of mind, when we are under the afflicting hand of God. For we are apt, on the one hand, not to take a ſufficient notice of afflictions which we are under, ſo as to behave ourſelves with an awful reſpect to the hand that afflicts us; or elſe we are, on the other, prone, when the affliction is very ſevere, to be ſo ſenſible of the pain we are under, as to forget the gracious and good deſigns which God hath in puniſhing us after this manner, ſo as to be *weary and faint* under the affliction; to give up our hope, and to take ſuch methods as are contrary to our duty, to get rid of the affliction.

1. We are not to *deſpiſe the chaſtening of the Lord.* And here we may obſerve,

(1.) That the greateſt degree of *deſpiſing the chaſtening of the Lord* is when men, with an inſolent contempt, deny the providence of God; and will take no notice of his chaſtenings, tho they are very ſevere and terrible. Thus the plagues which came upon Egypt for a while before thoſe people were deſtroyed, were to be accounted ſo many *chaſtenings* and *corrections* which God was pleaſed to uſe towards them; and which, if adverted to, might have prevented their utter ruin. But when *Pharaoh* ſaid, *Who is the Lord, that I ſhould obey his voice, to let Iſrael go* [c]*?* and harden'd his heart againſt all thoſe puniſhments inflicted by the divine providence; this was an extraordinary crime: and therefore God made the puniſhment as great; an extraordinary puniſhment was inflicted upon him. The prophet Jeremiah ſeems to ſpeak the ſame thing concerning the Iſraelites: *O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou haſt ſtricken them, but they have not grieved; thou haſt conſumed them, but they have refuſed to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, and have refuſed to return* [d]. This is the moſt dreadful ſtate of mind that can be imagin'd, when thoſe methods which are moſt proper to awaken men to repentance, have not that effect upon them; but when, with a ſupercilious contempt, they caſt off all kind

[c] Exod. 5. 2. [d] Jer. 5. 3.

of

of thoughts of hearkening to the voice of God, how loudly and terribly ſoever he ſpeaks.

(2.) There is a ſtupid ſort of impenitency that ſome people are guilty of under the corrections of God. When they do not formally *deſpiſe his chaſtenings*, they contemn them. Tho they do not openly declare they will perſiſt in their ſins, and ſay, that *as for the word of the Lord we will not do it*; yet when they remain ſtupid under their afflictions, and will not reform from their iniquities, they may be ſaid, very well, to *deſpiſe the chaſtenings of the Lord* to a great degree, tho not ſo great as the former. See the firſt chapter of Iſaiah: where the prophet is deſcribing the miſerable condition wherein the nation of the Jews were, who had been very criminal. *Ver.* 4. *Ah ſinful nation! a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forſaken the Lord; they have provoked the holy One of Iſrael to anger; they have gone away backward*, and had not regarded the methods which God had taken for reforming them. But, ſays he, *ver.* 5, 6. *Why ſhould you be ſtricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is ſick, and the whole heart is faint. From the ſole of the foot even unto the head, there is no ſoundneſs in it; but wounds, and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores: they have not been cloſed, neither bound up, neither mollified with*

with ointment. Then he goes on to threaten the deſolation that ſhould come upon them.

This is a very ſad ſign; when men remain ſtupid and impenitent, notwithſtanding the afflictions the providence of God makes uſe of for their reformation. It was not ſo with the Corinthians, when God was pleaſed to chaſtiſe them for their unworthy receiving of the Lord's ſupper, ſo that many of them were weak and ſickly upon that account. They were alarm'd to repentance, becauſe ſome of them *were fallen aſleep*[e]; i. e. cut off by the providence of God, to alarm the reſt. The apoſtle takes notice of their repentance: *with what fear, with what indignation, with what zeal,* they behaved themſelves againſt their ſins; *with what care,* and *with what clearing of themſelves*[f]; how induſtrious they were to reform. And we find the pſalmiſt often ſpeaks agreably hereto, when he groans under his afflictions. He complains loudly of his ſins; he cries out againſt his great iniquity; and invokes the divine mercy in a particular manner. You ſee how he expreſſes himſelf, how contrary to this ſtupid and impenitent frame of mind, in the 32d Pſalm; tho he ſeems, for a while, to have been negligent of the hand of God. Ver. 3, 4. *When I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old; thro' my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy*

[e] 1 Cor. 11. 30. | [f] 2 Cor. 7. 11.

upon

upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Then, *ver.* 5, 6. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee; and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayst be found.*

(3.) Persons may be guilty, even good men may be guilty of *despising the chastening of the Lord* in some degree, by an inadvertent negligence, when they take not that notice which they ought to do of the divine corrections with which they are exercised; which is most commonly the case, when the afflictions are very gentle and easy. This kindness and indulgence of God, when he chastens us with great tenderness, when he lays upon us but *light afflictions*, and takes mild methods for our recovery from sin, will certainly work upon ingenuous minds; and should ingage us more diligently to reform. But alas! we often abuse the divine indulgence and favour, by neglecting to advert to it; by looking upon our afflictions as if they were nothing but what is common to man; as if there was no hand of God concerned in them.

It is true, indeed, that when extraordinary afflictions fall upon us, such as do not commonly befal men, there is no reason that we should repine at the providence of God which inflicts them; because he has treated

others

others in the courſe of his goverment after the ſame manner. And if we compare our heavieſt afflictions with thoſe of the beſt of men recorded in the ſcripture, we have reaſon to acknowledge all is well, becauſe God hath not laid more upon us than upon others, who have been much more holy and conformable to the divine will than we are. But even if the afflictions with which we are exerciſed are common, we ſhould not account them as if they came not from the hand of God: for there are *no afflictions* that *ariſe out of the duſt*; *neither doth any trouble ſpring out of the ground*[g]. True piety will put us in mind of the hand of God in the leaſt affliction: for the more a child loves his father, and the more ingenuity that child hath, the more ſenſible will he be of the leaſt glance of his father's eye that ſignifies diſpleaſure. Therefore we may be ſaid to *deſpiſe the chaſtening of the Lord* when we take no notice, or little notice, of thoſe leſſer afflictions with which he exerciſes us. And as this is diſingenuous, ſo it is dangerous. It is diſingenuous: for, as all our afflictions come from the hand of our heavenly father, and it is in love that he chaſtiſes us; we ſhould certainly take notice of the leaſt turn of his eye, of the leaſt ſtroke of his hand, when he is diſpleaſed with us. Such a neglect is dangerous alſo: for if we are not a-

[g] Job 5. 6.

wakened

wakened with the leſſer ſtrokes of the divine hand, we are likely to pull down heavier judgments upon our heads. It behoves us, therefore on all occaſions, whatſoever the affliction be, with which we are chaſtiſed, to take care that we do not deſpiſe the hand of the Lord that lays it on.

We are very prone, likewiſe, ſo to buſy our thoughts upon ſecond cauſes, as to forget that it is God who diſpoſes of all perſons and things, and of all events, as he ſees good. We are ready to be angry with thoſe who are inſtruments of our afflictions in this world; and to employ all our thoughts how we ſhall be delivered out of trouble, what means and meaſures we may uſe, humanly ſpeaking, to get rid of the miſery we are under; inſtead of adverting to the hand of providence, and conſidering that there is no *evil in a city*, no puniſhment, no affliction, but there is a hand of God in it. *Is there any evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it* [h] *?* When men are reproached and reviled by their fellow creatures, their minds are too often filled with revenge; if not ſo, however with anger, againſt thoſe who have offended them: whereas they ought piouſly to reflect upon the hand of God, and quietly ſubmit themſelves to him, as David did at the curſes of Shimei. When one of his captains would have perſuaded him to

[h] Amos 3. 6.

be

be reveng'd upon him; inſtead of hearkning to his advice, *let him curſe*, ſays he; *becauſe the Lord hath ſaid unto him curſe David: who then ſhall ſay wherefore haſt thou done ſo*[i]? "There is a hand of God in it; and "this is permited for my further humilia- "tion: inſtead of irritating myſelf againſt "him, I will humble myſelf ſtill farther "under the hand of God, and leave ven- "geance to him to whom it belongs." We are often likewiſe ſo buſy in projecting how we may get rid of our afflictions, in endeavouring to ſeek out ſome relief, that we forget what God deſigns thereby; and ſo we are faſtened in the net, and our troubles come more thick upon us, becauſe we have neglected to repent and humble ourſelves as God requires. It is true, we ought to uſe all thoſe methods for our help under affliction, which human prudence directs; and we may ask counſel of God how we may be delivered out of trouble: but we ought firſt to obſerve the hand of God in the affliction, and be humbled under it; to look to the father of ſpirits with a *broken and contrite heart*, under a ſenſe of our ſins; and then we ſhall not fail of ſome relief and ſupport under our troubles, and perhaps a ſpeedy deliverance out of them.

We are therefore to be thoughtful and conſiderate; to watch the motions of our hea-

[i] 2 Sam. 16. 10, 11.

venly

venly father, and ſo advert to the conduct of his providence, upon all accounts, as to obſerve the favour that he beſtows upon us, that we may be thankful to him; and ſo to obſerve his hand in afflicting us, as to ſubmit ourſelves to his will, and humble ourſelves after a becoming manner before him.

2. As to the other thing againſt which we are caution'd, the *being weary* or faint *when we are corrected of God*; we may obſerve,

(1.) That perſons may be ſaid to be *weary of* divine *correction*, when their minds are ſo diſturbed that they make it appear by their murmuring and complaining againſt the divine providence. And if they do not expreſs themſelves openly after this manner, yet if ſuch thoughts and ſentiments are in their minds, they are guilty before God of being weary of his correction to a great degree. It is a reflection upon the goodneſs and mercy of God, and upon his wiſdom and authority, when we are ſo weary of his chaſtenings as to murmur at him. As if *the judge of all the earth would not do right* [k]; as if he did not treat us as his children, but as his enemies, when he hath ſo plainly and frequently declared that theſe are the corrections of a father. See what the prophet Iſaiah ſpeaks, chap. 45. *ver.* 9, 10, 11. con-

[k] Gen. 18. 25.

cerning ſuch a temper as this. *Wo unto him that ſtriveth with his maker: let the potſheard ſtrive with the potſheards of the earth: ſhall the clay ſay unto him that faſhioneth it, what makeſt thou; or thy work, he hath no hands? Wo unto him that ſaith unto his father, what begetteſt thou? or to the woman, what haſt thou brought forth? Thus ſaith the Lord, the holy one of Iſrael, and his maker; ask of me things to come concerning my ſons; and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.* In theſe words God reproves the inſolence of man, when he will, upon any account whatſoever, complain of the proceedings of his maker. The ſovereign authority of God over us, were enough ſurely to ſilence us: and as he hath infinite power, ſo he hath infinite wiſdom. It is not therefore for ſuch ignorant and vile creatures as we are, to complain againſt the author of our being, and the governour of the world. It is as abſurd as *if the clay ſhould cry out againſt the potter, what makeſt thou? or thy work, he hath no hands.*

It is true, ſome may ſay concerning thoſe words in the 11th verſe, *Thus ſaith the Lord, the holy one of Iſrael, and his maker, ask of me things to come concerning my ſons*; do not they incourage us to ask of God the deſign of all his works? and ſome people have made uſe of the following words, *concerning the works of my hands, command ye me*, to juſtify a peremptory and indecent way

of expreſſion before him in prayer, as if God required them to command him to do any thing. But there is more reaſon to believe that it is ſpoken ironically: *Ask of me of the things concerning my ſons*; behave yourſelves thus abſurdly and fooliſhly, as to command me concerning *the work of my hands:* you who are vile creatures, leſs than nothing, and vanity, take upon you, if you think fit, to command me; and ſee what will be the conſequence of this inſolence of yours. Or in the ſame ſenſe it may be ſpoken by way of interrogation; *do you ask of me, concerning my ſons?* concerning the method of my proceeding? Do you command me? Do you pretend to take upon you the authority to do theſe things? And this is very agreeable to the context. How indecent and unjuſt a thing is it to murmur at the providence of God, and complain againſt his proceedings? This is very contrary to that meek temper which is recommended to us by the pſalmiſt, in Pſalm 39. *ver.* 2. *I was dumb with ſilence; I held my peace.* And, *ver.* 9, 10, 11. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; becauſe thou didſt it. Remove thy ſtroke away from me: I am conſumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes doſt correct man for iniquity, thou makeſt his beauty to conſume away, like a moth. Surely every man is vanity.* How humbly and meekly does he ſpeak? *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth;*

that is, ſo as to complain indecently, and murmur at the divine providence. Tho he was ready to be conſumed with the affliction, yet he would not ſpeak indecently of the divine diſpenſations. So Eli, when he was told by Samuel of terrible judgments which God would bring upon his family; *it is the Lord*, ſays he, *let him do what ſeemeth good in his ſight* [l]. But,

(2.) As ſome may inſolently murmur againſt the providence of God, and be ready to charge him fooliſhly, or to complain againſt the juſtice of his proceedings, or the wiſdom of them; ſo ſome, by this means, work themſelves into a deſpair of the mercy of God. They are ſo *weary of his chaſtenings*, that they are ready to ſay, *why ſhould they wait upon the Lord any longer* [m]? eſpecially when the affliction is tedious, as to its duration, as well as to the degree of it. So the church was ready to ſay, or the prophet Jeremiah, in the 3d chapter of Lamentations, *ver.* 1. *I am the man that hath ſeen affliction by the rod of his wrath.* Here the prophet ſeems to complain for himſelf: *He hath led me, and brought me into darkneſs, but not into light*, &c. And in the 8th, and following verſes: *Alſo when I cry and ſhout, he ſhutteth out my prayer. He hath incloſed my ways with hewn ſtone: he hath made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in ſecret places. He*

[l] 1 Sam. 3. 18. | [m] 2 Kings 6. 33.

hath

hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. I was a derision to all my people, and their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness; he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel-stones: he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity. And I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. The extremity of affliction seems to make him give up all his hope for the present. *I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord; remembring mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.* But soon after he recovers from this indisposition of mind: *This,* says he, *I recal to mind; therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not.* Even good men are sometimes ready to despair. *My way,* says the church, *is hid from the Lord; and my judgment is passed over from my God* [n].

But the apostle Paul, when he speaks of the greatness of his distresses, shews, at the same time, the confidence he had in God; and that he was not weary of the *chastenings of the Lord,* which were inflicted on him:

[n] Isa. 40. 27.

2 Cor. 4. 8, 9, 10. *We are troubled*, ſays he, *on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; we are perplexed, but not in deſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jeſus, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our body.* As much as to ſay, "We have many great afflictions preſſing us; but ſtill we have that confidence "in the divine goodneſs, that vigour of "mind by the ſtrength we receive from "God, that we do not deſpair: *We do not* "*caſt away our confidence, which hath a great* "*recompence of reward* [o]." And to the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle argues with the Hebrews, in the 12th chapter, when he paraphraſes upon the words of our text; and ſhews them, that notwithſtanding their afflictions were great, they being in perſecution and tribulation, yet ſtill God was *correcting and chaſtening them as children:* therefore they were not to *faint under his rebukes.*

This evil ſometimes hath obtained upon men to ſuch a degree, as to cauſe them to ſeek indirect ways of eſcaping the afflictions they are under. So Saul, when he found his circumſtances in a very miſerable condition, as God had predicted to him by the prophet, inſtead of humbling himſelf under the hand of God for his ſins, ſtrives to get rid of his troubles by applying himſelf to

[o] Heb. 10. 35.

the

the witch of Endor [p]. Hereby he aggravated his tranſgreſſion; and accordingly was intirely ruin'd. And even ſome good men have been ready to fly from God: in time of perſecutions, ſome good men have been tempted to deny the truth. So dangerous is it *to be weary of God's chaſtenings*, that men thereby expoſe themſelves to great guilt; and, conſequently, to the danger of greater puniſhment. Inſtead of ſtriving to fly from the hand of God in a way that he approves not of, we ſhould firſt apply ourſelves to *the father of ſpirits, that we may live* [q]; reſign up ourſelves to the conduct of his providence, and acknowledge he does it in *mercy* and *in very faithfulneſs* [r], as the pſalmiſt ſays: and then we may hope God will ſtrengthen us to bear affliction, or find out a way for our eſcape from it.

But if good men do not, to that degree laſt mention'd, faint under the ſtrokes of divine providence, yet they do too often diſtruſt the providence of God, becauſe they cannot ſee an end of their affliction; or becauſe they are diſtreſſed ſo with the acuteneſs of their pain, that they can hardly look to God, can hardly pour forth their prayers to him, hardly believe he can deliver them out of the preſent trouble. They are ready to queſtion God's love and faithfulneſs. When the pſalmiſt, on the one hand, took notice

[p] 1 Sam. 28.
[q] Heb. 12. 9.
[r] Pſal. 119. 75.

of his own afflictions; and, on the other hand, of the proſperity of the wicked; he was, for the preſent, ready to think there was nothing at all in religion. Tho he did not totally deſpair, yet ſuch ſudden and unaccountable thoughts came into his mind, ſuch thoughts that a good man can hardly pardon in himſelf, as if he had *cleanſed his hands in vain*; or as if God did not regard what befel good men in this world. See the 73d Pſalm. The pſalmiſt had ſaid concerning the wicked, *ver.* 5, &c. *they are not in trouble, as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compaſſeth them about, as a chain; violence covereth them, as a garment. Their eyes ſtand out with fatneſs: they have more than heart could wiſh. They are corrupt, and ſpeak wickedly concerning oppreſſion: they ſpeak loftily. They ſet their mouth againſt the heavens; and their tongue walketh thro' the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they ſay, How doth God know? and is their knowledge in the moſt High? Behold, theſe are the ungodly, who proſper in the world: they increaſe in riches. Verily, I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed mine hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued; and chaſtened every morning.* He was tempted to ſpeak after this manner. But he ſoon recals himſelf: *ver.* 15——18. *If I ſay, I will ſpeak thus; behold, I ſhould offend againſt the gene-*

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ration of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the ſanctuary of God: then underſtood I their end. Surely thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places: thou caſtedſt them down into deſtruction. q. d. "They are favoured by thy "providence; but however they will be de- "ſtroyed ſuddenly: whereas thoſe who are "*chaſtened every morning*, who have fre- "quent corrections, are treated as thy chil- "dren: therefore I will recal thoſe thoughts; "I will ſay no more *I have cleanſed my heart* "*in vain*," &c. And he begins the pſalm after this manner, *Truly God is good to Iſrael*; which ſhews that this pſalm is a repreſentation of thoſe ſudden and raſh ſentiments he had entertained of the divine diſpenſations, and how he was delivered from them.

We ſhould have a care then of being weary of God's corrections, ſo as to diſtruſt his faithfulneſs, or his goodneſs and mercy. We ſhould rather interpret ſuch diſpenſations as the apoſtle does [f], and as the wiſe man in our text; that all things are *for our profit*; that theſe are the corrections of a father, and not the wounds of an enemy; theſe troubles are brought upon us for our greateſt advantage, to purify our ſouls from ſin, and not that we may be deſtroyed by them. God does not take pleaſure in our ſorrows; does not ſtrike us, becauſe he delights to hear us

[f] Heb. 12. 5.

groan and cry; but it is to make us better, and to render us more fit for intimate communion with himſelf, and for the enjoyment of a perfect ſtate of bliſs and glory hereafter.

Thus have I diſpatched the firſt head; ſhewn you what we are to underſtand by this caution of the wiſe man, *My ſon, deſpiſe not the chaſtening of the Lord*, &c. All the afflictions in this world, of whatſoever kind, whether they are troubles from without, or from within, whether they are ſuch as ariſe from our own thoughts, or from thoſe calamities we are liable to while we are here; whether it be loſs of eſtate, or of reputation, or of health, or of friends, and relations; whatſoever trial or affliction we are expoſed to in this world, we are to acknowledge the hand of God in it. It is *his chaſtening*; and we are to receive it, and ſubmit to it, under the notion of a *chaſtening*. We are to be careful likewiſe, that we receive the correction from God as from a father. There is a peculiar relation betwixt him and the righteous. They are his children, in a ſpecial ſenſe. He delights in them; he hath a tender regard for them; and, when he chaſtens them, it is *for their profit:* and that is an argument wherewith the wiſe man backs what he had ſaid before. And ſo does the apoſtle: *Whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and correcteth every ſon in whom he delighteth*; i. e. to whom he hath a tender regard. This is his method with them; and it hath been

been thus thro' the whole courſe of God's providence. This hath been declared thro'-out the Old Teſtament, and the New. And as he hath all along taken this method, ſo the conſequence of things hath plainly juſtified it, that he hath no deſign thereby, but for the advantage of his people; and that they may be conformable to him: he chaſtens them *for their profit.* But of this argument more at large hereafter.

SER-

SERMON IX.

Preach'd at

JOINERS-HALL, March 24, 1705-6.

PROV. iii. 11, 12.

My ſon, deſpiſe not the chaſtening of the Lord: neither be weary of his correction. For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth; even as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.

The ſecond SERMON on this text.

THO theſe words are the words of Solomon, it was obſerved to you, in a former diſcourſe, that a *greater than Solomon is here* [s]; and that this very paſſage is uſed by the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, as ſpoken by God himſelf to his children [t]. So that Solomon is not to be conſidered here as only ſpeaking to his own family as a father, or to his ſubjects as the father of his people, or ſpeaking as philoſophers uſed to

[s] Luke 11. 31. | [t] Heb. 12. 5.

do

do to their diſciples, with the tender compellation or expreſſion, *my ſon*; but God himſelf is perſonated by him ſpeaking to his children, to let them know how they ought to behave themſelves under the afflictions of his providence.

I obſerv'd to you that the words conſiſted of two parts: the caution that is given againſt indecent behaviour under affliction, *My ſon, deſpiſe not the chaſtening of the Lord, nor be weary of his correction*; and the argument by which this is inforced; *for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.* The former of theſe we have gone through. And, in explaining this caution, I have taken notice how the holy Spirit terms the afflictions which good men meet with in this world. They are all *corrections* and *chaſtenings of the Lord.* And tho the term *chaſtening*, or *correction*, ſometimes is uſed to ſignify the puniſhments God inflicts upon the wicked of the world, the leſſer puniſhments, before *his wrath breaks forth like fire*, ſo that *none can quench it*; yet, in a ſpecial manner, God ſignifies hereby how he deals with his own peculiar people. And as the wicked are chaſtened by him as vaſſals are chaſtened by their Lord, or as ſubjects by the magiſtrate; ſo the people of God are chaſtened by him as a father. It is becauſe he diſdains not to call his people *his children.* And in a particular manner they are chaſtiſed by him with

with the wiſdom, tenderneſs, and compaſſion of a father; deſigning all for their profit and advantage; and mixing all with abundance of mercy, in order to bring about that great end.

I have obſerv'd to you that there are various degrees of *deſpiſing the chaſtening of the Lord*, and *of being weary*, or *fainting under his correction:* that good men cannot, in the utmoſt degree, at any time *deſpiſe the chaſtening of the Lord, or be weary of his rebukes*; but they are prone to offend in this matter in ſome degree, and may ſometimes be tempted to offend to a very great degree, unleſs they obſerve this divine caution. The wicked, when they are corrected by the providence of God, ſometimes with a ſupercilious contempt *deſpiſe his correction*, and cry, *who is the Lord, that I ſhould obey him* [u]? as Pharaoh did; and very often with an obſtinate impudence they refuſe to be reclaim'd, and to return, tho God is pleaſed to repeat his ſtrokes upon them. But good men themſelves ſometimes are guilty of ſo far *deſpiſing correction* from the hand of God, as to be ſupinely negligent, inadvertently negligent, when his corrections are not very ſevere. And ſometimes they pore ſo much upon ſecond cauſes, and are ſo diligently employed about uſing of temporal means to get rid of their afflictions, that they do not conſult

[u] Exod. 5. 2.

their

their conſciences, and conſider the hand that ſmites, ſo as to return at the reproofs of the Lord. Sometimes becauſe no uncommon affliction happens unto them, no ſtrange affliction, but what is common to men, they are ready careleſly to neglect conſulting the divine will upon theſe occaſions, and hearkning to the voice of providence: whereas *no affliction ariſes out of the duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the ground* [v]. But we ought ſeriouſly to reflect upon the divine hand in every chaſtiſement we are exercis'd with, and whatever ſecond cauſes may be the occaſion thereof.

I have alſo ſhewn you, that tho it is not common for good men to murmur at the providence of God in thoſe terms which the wicked do, who are ready to charge the Almighty with regardleſneſs, or injuſtice, or want of mercy, when they are ſeverely afflicted; tho they do not ſo repine at the divine hand when God is pleaſed to ſmite them, as peremptorily to call him to an account concerning his matters, and to deſpair of his mercy; yet they are ſometimes tempted to diſtruſt his providence; their faith is weakned, and their hope is almoſt *like the giving up of the ghoſt* [w]. They are ready to faint under his chaſtenings for the preſent, till they recover themſelves, by calling to mind what they have often learned by experience,

[v] Job 5. 6.

[w] *Chap.* 11. 20.

and

and by conſulting in the ſanctuary [x] the methods of divine providence in the government of the world, and the promiſes of God to his people, recover ſuch a preſence of mind, as enables them to reaſon juſtly concerning this affair. I have ſhewn you that we are, as much as poſſible, to avoid theſe extremes; not to ſlight the affliction when it is light and eaſy, nor to faint under the hand of God when his chaſtenings are heavy and ſevere. My buſineſs is now,

Secondly, To diſcourſe of the argument in anſwer both to the one and to the other of theſe extremes; the argument of the wiſe man, and which afterwards the apoſtle in the 12th to the Hebrews uſes, to ſhew that we are not to *ſlight the chaſtenings of the Lord, nor to faint when we are rebuked of him*, or *to be weary of his correction*; that we are not to be negligent of his ſtrokes when they are more gentle, nor to be utterly diſconſolate, or diffident of his chaſtiſements when they are more terrible. The reaſon is in the 12th verſe: *For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.* Correction is an argument of divine love: *Whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth.* And this is illuſtrated to us by the compariſon of a father, a wiſe and a tender-hearted father; *even as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.*

[x] Pſal. 73. 17.

Whom

Whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth. It is an argument of his kindneſs and indulgence to mankind in general, when he is pleaſed to correct them by his providence, before they incur the ſeverity of his vengeance. And thus he often warns nations, and particular perſons of their impending ruin, by previous corrections. And happy are they if they take notice of them; as it is ſaid in Job 5. 17, *&c. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Almighty. For he maketh ſore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He ſhall deliver thee in ſix troubles; yea, in ſeven there ſhall no evil touch thee. In famine, he ſhall redeem thee from death; and in war, from the power of the ſword. Thou ſhalt be hid from the ſcourge of the tongue: neither ſhalt thou be afraid of deſtruction when it cometh.* Thus Eliphaz goes on in ſhewing the happineſs of ſuch as receive the divine corrections in a proper manner; what future judgments are prevented thereby, when they behave themſelves decently under the correcting hand of God. But *if the wicked will not turn, he whets his glittering ſword, and his hand takes hold on judgment: he renders vengeance to them as to his enemies; and rewards them according to their iniquities* [y]. Then, inſtead of chaſtening, deſtruction enſues.

[y] Deut. 32. 41.

But our text, as I told you in the former diſcourſe, hath a ſpecial regard to the methods of God in dealing with his own peculiar people: therefore I conſider it with a ſpecial reference to them. And they are *bleſſed* indeed, whom God corrects after ſuch a manner, as thereby to expreſs to them his peculiar love; the perſons whom he delights in, he therefore corrects, to ſignify his love to them. So that it ſeems, by the account the wiſe man gives us, that it is not at all inconſiſtent with the divine love to correct the beſt of men. It is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with his love, that it is an argument of his affection to them: and there is none whom he loves, but he takes care to correct after ſuch a manner. The pſalmiſt ſays of the wicked, *they are not in trouble, like other men* [z], &c. They ſeem to be given up by God to indulge themſelves in their luſts, and abandon themſelves to their ſins. *Why ſhould you be ſtricken any more?* ſays the prophet; *ye will revolt more and more* [a]! Rebellious children, incorrigible children, of whom the parent deſpairs, they are given up and abandon'd, becauſe there is no hope of reclaiming them. But thoſe who belong to God's peculiar family, thoſe who are his children, renewed by his grace, and adopted into his own family, his peculiar inheritance; theſe he will take care continually

[z] Pſal. 73. 5. | [a] Iſa. 1. 5.

to correct: he will not give them up to the power of temptation; but, upon proper occasions, he will chasten them according to the terms of the covenant. *If thy children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail* [b].

God in justice gives up wicked men, when they have been corrected by his hand, and they do not return. But for his people, who are taken into covenant with him, and are become the children of his peculiar family, he hath oblig'd himself, and his love obliges him to correct them, that so they may be reformed, that so they may be recovered from their backslidings. This is very aptly illustrated by *a father's correcting his son, in whom he delighteth.* And you may please to observe the paraphrase that is made upon these words by the author to the Hebrews, in the 12th chapter, where he cites this text; particularly that part of it I am now upon, *ver.* 6. *For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Where he follows the translation of the Septuagint [c]. The sense is much the same of the words in the text; *as a*

[b] Psal. 89. 30.

[c] ὃν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ κύριος, παιδεύει· μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται. LXXII.

father the ſon in whom he delighteth. Here it is, *every ſon whom he receiveth*; i. e. whom he owns and acknowledges to be a member of his peculiar family; every ſon whom he receives to his peculiar favour, whom he acknowledges to be genuine. *If ye endure chaſtening, God dealeth with you as with ſons: or what ſon is he whom the father chaſteneth not* [d]? Is there any prudent father who does not correct his ſon? No, ſays the apoſtle. *God dealeth with you as with ſons.* When he chaſteneth you, it is an argument that he loves you as children. *But if ye are without chaſtening, whereof all are partakers, then are ye baſtards, and not ſons* [e]. You do not belong to the family, if you are not corrected. If you are the children of God, and delighted in, and loved by him as his children, you will certainly be chaſtened by him.

Furthermore, ſays the apoſtle, *we have had fathers of our fleſh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: ſhall we not much rather be ſubject unto the Father of ſpirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chaſtened us after their own pleaſure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holineſs* [f]. *We have had fathers of our fleſh*, to whom, under God, we owe our being, as the fathers of our fleſh, or natural parents; theſe have *corrected us, and we have*

[d] Heb. 12. 7.
[e] *Ver.* 8.
[f] *Ver.* 9, 10.

given

given them reverence. But God is *the Father of* our *ſpirits*; he who made our ſouls, who *breathed into us the breath of life* [g], who made us rational beings. Beſides that he is the author of our beings intirely; of our bodies, as well as of our ſouls, as he is our creator. And ſhall not we be ſubject to him? Shall not we pay him reverence, and ſubmit ourſelves to his chaſtenings? Theſe *fathers of our fleſh* conſidered the advantages of this animal life; *chaſtened us*, that we might not indulge ill humours and ill manners, which would render us unfit for human ſociety. But *the father of our ſpirits* chaſtiſeth us for the advantage of our ſouls, to make us fit for the heavenly ſociety. The *fathers of our fleſh chaſtened us for a few days* during the time of our minority, that ſo our ill inclinations and diſpoſitions might be corrected, that we might be fitted for ſociety in this world: but *for a few days*, till we could be ſuppoſed to govern ourſelves by reaſon. But our heavenly Father corrects us *for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holineſs.* He corrects us *for our profit*, till we are advanced to a ſtate of maturity, and fitted for the heavenly kingdom. Our earthly fathers *chaſtened us for their own pleaſure*; oftentimes out of humour more than out of prudence; oftentimes in a great deal of paſſion: however, after their own paſſions; in ſuch a meaſure, and at ſuch ſeaſons as they

[g] Gen. 2. 7.

thought fit. Perhaps they uſed too much indulgence, and ſo neglected the exerciſe of this duty; which, if rightly perform'd, might have prov'd to our great advantage: or elſe were too ſevere in their chaſtiſements; which provokes children to wrath, and renders the correction ineffectual. But our heavenly Father chaſtiſes us *for our profit:* he always hath that in his view: and he uſes tenderneſs and compaſſion in his chaſtiſements. *Now no chaſtening for the preſent ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheleſs, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs unto them which are exerciſed thereby* [h]. As if the apoſtle ſhould ſay, "It "is true, this doctrine may not appear very "grateful to you; *for there is no affliction* "*ſeems joyous to us for the preſent, but grie-* "*vous:* but, if we would reaſon juſtly, we "muſt conſider the future effects of it; "*afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of* "*righteouſneſs to them that are exerciſed* "*thereby.*"

So that you ſee, as the wiſe man illuſtrates his argument by this compariſon, when there is a juſt conſideration of it, we find that God's correcting us for our ſins, if we are his peculiar people, is done after ſuch a manner, that it is an argument of much greater love as well as much greater wiſdom, than appears in the correction that any earthly

[h] Heb. 12. 11.

parent

parent gives to any of his children. Therefore the argument is ſo much the ſtronger: *Whom he loveth, he chaſteneth; as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.* But to make this more evidently appear, let us conſider it more particularly. And I ſhall ſhew you that correction is an argument of the divine love to good men, from the conſideration of the uſual method of God in this matter: and then, from the reaſon of the thing itſelf.

1. From the conſideration of God's uſual method. We may ſuppoſe that ſeeing God is infinitely wiſe, infinitely good, and infinitely merciful; thoſe on whom he hath placed the marks of his favour and kindneſs chiefly, muſt needs be fit examples to be propoſed upon this occaſion, from whom we may take meaſure. Now if we conſider how God hath dealt with the moſt eminent ſervants of his that have ever been in the world, and it appears that he hath been uſed to correct and chaſten them; it cannot be inconſiſtent with his love, but muſt be a proof of it, wherever he is pleaſed to take this method. *Moſes and Aaron among his prieſts, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; the Lord was merciful to forgive them their iniquities, but took vengeance upon their inventions* [i]. He chaſtened them for their ſins, tho he pardoned them.

[i] Pſal. 99. 6, 8.

Did he not exerciſe the moſt eminent patriarchs, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, with various troubles and afflictions? Did he not call them to a life of ſelf-denial; to forſake their deareſt relations and country, and to wander in a ſtrange land, *not knowing whither they went* [k]? and did he not there exerciſe them with a multitude of afflictions? This was the caſe of Jacob more eſpecially: ſo that he cried out, *all theſe things are againſt me* [l]. And yet it is evident God made all things concur for his good and profit. Was not Joſeph exemplary for his piety, and chiefly ſo in his father's family? and yet this muſt be the perſon who ſhould be exil'd and perſecuted by his own brethren, and ſlandered as being guilty of that vice which he moſt abhorred, and confined in priſon till the *irons entred into his ſoul* [m]; tho afterwards God brought him out of theſe afflictions, and advanced him to great temporal honour in Egypt.

Was not Moſes tried with great afflictions, when he was ungratefully accuſed by his brethren; whom, when perſecuted, he reveng'd at his own peril; whoſe differences he would have reconcil'd, but his kind offers were rejected? And did he not ſhew a juſt ſenſe of his true intereſt, in *chooſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon* [n]?

[k] Heb. 11. 8.
[l] Gen. 42. 36.
[m] Pſal. 105. 18.
[n] Heb. 11. 25.

Did

Did not God exerciſe the church of Iſrael, when he called them out of Egypt, with great trials and afflictions while they were in the wilderneſs? Was not Job a man ſo pious, that God ſeems to have gloried in him? *Haſt thou*, ſays God to ſatan, *conſidered my ſervant Job, that there is none like him in the earth; a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and eſcheweth evil* [o]? and yet who was exerciſed with greater affliction than he? *Remember the patience of Job* therefore, ſays the apoſtle James, *and the end of the Lord* [p]. Was not David *a man after God's own heart* [q]? yet who had more trouble and ſorrow than he? who ſighed and groaned oftner, and oftner *watered his couch with tears* [r], than he? Who was comparable to Jeremiah in his time, for love to God, and love to his church? but *I am the man*, ſays he, *that hath ſeen affliction* [s]; the moſt remarkable for ſorrow and affliction in his time.

And in the New Teſtament, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who was the object of his father's love in the moſt eminent manner, yet he was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief* [t]. It is true, his ſufferings were ordained to make atonement for our ſins: but there was another deſign in them alſo; *viz.* to ſet us an example of patience, and thoſe

[o] Job 1. 8.
[p] James 5. 11.
[q] 1 Sam. 13. 14.
[r] Pſal. 6. 6.
[s] Lam. 3. 1.
[t] Iſa. 53. 3.

other graces which appeared in our Redeemer under all his afflictions; that we might *not deſpiſe the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him.* For, what are our ſorrows in compariſon of his? Therefore the author to the Hebrews, in the beginning of that 12th chapter, adviſes us to *look unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith; who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God* [t]. If it were fair arguing, that when God chaſtens or corrects a man, he does not therefore love him; it would follow, that the Son of God being chaſtened and corrected by his father, was not beloved by him. But it muſt be acknowledged the Father loved him infinitely: yet was he *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.* Therefore the divine love is very conſiſtent with our being exerciſed in this world with a ſtate of affliction.

How do the apoſtles deſcribe their own ſufferings? *diſtreſſed on every ſide* [u]; *in journeyings often; in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by their own countrymen* [v], &c. Beſides the tears they ſhed upon the account of the weakneſſes and ſins of which the churches were guilty which they planted and watered; they were continually expoſed to trouble. *Without were fightings, within*

[t] *Ver.* 2.
[u] 2 Cor. 7. 5.
[v] *Chap.* 11. 26.

were

were fears: they were *diſtreſſed on every ſide* [w]; yet they did not miſinterpret the divine conduct towards them. *I think*, ſays the apoſtle Paul, *that God hath ſet forth us the apoſtles laſt, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a ſpectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men* [x]: alluding to the Roman ſpectacles, that is, to thoſe barbarous ſhews they made, in which gladiators fought till one deſtroyed another; or malefactors were torn by wild beaſts in the ſight of the multitude. "We "are made ſuch ſpectacles as theſe, expoſed to "all manner of cruelties: we ſerve to divert "the wicked world by our ſufferings; but, if "our ſufferings abound, our love abounds." They did not accuſe God for their afflictions; but argued, *theſe afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* [y]. They conſidered that theſe chaſtiſements were to improve them, and to make them ripe for heaven.

So that if we will take our meaſures from the conduct of God's providence towards the beſt of men that ever have been in the world; we ſhall find he hath chaſtened them and corrected them very ſeverely; and yet this was ſo far from being an argument of his want of love to them, that it was a proof of it; and ſo they themſelves reckoned, when they ſpake moſt ſeriouſly about it. So ſays the pſalmiſt: *Before I was afflicted, I went*

[w] 2 Cor 7. 7, 5.
[x] 1 Cor. 4. 9.
[y] 2 Cor. 4. 17.

aſtray;

aſtray; but now I have learned to keep thy commandments [z]. And, *in very faithfulneſs thou haſt afflicted me* [a]. But beſides theſe examples which ſhew that this is the uſual method God takes, let us come,

2. To conſider the thing itſelf more narrowly. And it will appear that correction is an argument of the divine love, when we conſider that this is a means in itſelf very well adapted to the end that God propoſes, which is *our profit*, and *to make us partakers of his holineſs* [b]; to mortify our ſins, and to make us more holy. Theſe means are very well accommodated in themſelves to this purpoſe. God hath not only declared that this is his deſign, to do us good; (and if ſo, the principle from whence he acts muſt be love) he hath not only ſhewn it from the examples I have mentioned, and indeed the conſtant courſe of providence: but conſider affliction in itſelf, and you will find it a proper means to promote our advantage. I will not ſuppoſe that any one doubts that the divine corrections are deſigned for our good, if by that good is meant our being rendred conformable to God in holineſs; for that is neceſſary in order to our being happy for ever. And therefore if it appear that this is a proper means conducive to that end; it will appear farther, that it is out of love that God chaſtens us.

[z] Pſal. 119. 67.
[a] *Ver.* 75.
[b] Heb. 12. 10.

All

All the evil that befals us, all the evil of ſuffering, is on account of the evil of ſin. Therefore if the evil of ſuffering be made efficacious to ſubdue our ſins, it muſt needs be for our advantage. Sin is the greateſt evil in the world; therefore it is of the higheſt importance for us to be delivered from it. Holineſs is the greateſt good of which we are capable; and therefore it is of the greateſt advantage for our ſouls to be adorned with it. Now afflictions tend both to mortify our ſins, and to improve us in grace and holineſs. They tend to mortify our ſins, upon many accounts. What is more proper than affliction to make us remember how frail we are, that ſo we may *number our days, and apply our hearts to wiſdom* [c]? When all things are calm and ſerene about us, we are ready to forget we are mortal, that we are frail and imperfect creatures; and to imagine that this is our ſtate of happineſs. But when God makes us feel the ſmart of affliction, this puts us in mind that this world *is not our reſt, becauſe it is polluted* [d]; that here *we all walk in a vain ſhew* [e]; that *all is vanity, and vexation of ſpirit* [f]; and there is no ſolid delight to be taken in any thing here below. We are here but for a ſhort ſeaſon; and there is no temporal enjoyment that can render us really and truly happy; and therefore providence makes our

[c] Pſal. 90. 12.
[d] Mic. 2. 10.
[e] Pſal. 39. 6.
[f] Eccleſ. 2. 17.

ſituation

ſituation in this world uneaſy to us: whatſoever our circumſtances may be at preſent, ſome croſs providence will imbitter all to us in a little time. And it is fit it ſhould be ſo; for it tends to promote the original and great deſign of our beings, our happineſs. This method of providence naturally puts us upon a proper conſideration of things, and leads us to look after that which is better than we can enjoy in this imperfect ſtate.

Particularly, the diſeaſes of our bodies ſhew us conſtantly how frail we are; and as our own diſeaſes, ſo the ſickneſſes and death of our friends teach us the weakneſs and mortality of our frame. And this is one of the precepts of wiſdom, that we ſhould *ſo number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wiſdom* [g]. And experience abundantly teſtifies, that mens conſidering their own frailty and mortality, has prov'd a very advantageous means to make them ſerious; that, as Solomon obſerves, *the living lay to heart* the death of others [h]. When we loſe our friends and acquaintance, does not this make us conſider that *all men walk here in a vain ſhew* [i]; and that for us to be happy for ever, is to have an intimate acquaintance with God, and communion with him? When we loſe our eſtates, or any part of them, (for *riches make to themſelves wings, and fly away from us* [k]) as this

[g] Pſal. 90. 12.
[h] Eccleſ. 7. 2.
[i] Pſal. 39. 6.
[k] Prov. 23. 5.

puts

puts us in mind of the vanity of these earthly treasures; so it is natural to consider hereupon that we should *lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven* [l], and that we should the more carefully improve the remaining talent which God hath intrusted in our hands, before we lose it. When we are under any trouble or affliction in this world, it should put us upon considering that our true happiness is not to be obtained here, but that we are to seek for a sublime happiness in the heavenly state; *durable riches, and righteousness* [m]; an establishment that can never be shaken; a kingdom that can never be mov'd; a state of life that will be far from the fear of death, or the least pain or sorrow. What can be more proper to put us in mind of these things? prosperity makes us forget them; but affliction revives those ideas upon our souls, and makes us sensible of these things, the consideration of which, is of the greatest importance to us.

And as our affliction thus puts us in mind of our own frailty, and the vanity of this world, and the things of it; so it is very natural, if we are serious and considerate, for these afflictions to make us look back to the cause from whence they spring. When a man finds himself in misery, is it not proper for him, as a rational creature, to say; "From whence does this affliction come?

[l] Mat. 6. 20. | [m] Prov. 8. 18.

" Not from ſecond cauſes only, but from the " providence of God: and why ſhould this " God, who is ſo good, ſo wiſe and merci- " ful, afflict me after this manner? He de- " lights not in my ſorrow and trouble. He " *does not willingly afflict or grieve the chil-* " *dren of men* [n]. *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I* " *have no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner* [o]. " He does not delight in the ſorrows of his " people in themſelves; but he afflicts them " to prevent their falling into a greater miſ- " chief: as he is a God of infinite wiſdom, " he certainly ſees there is an occaſion, a " neceſſity for it. He is a juſt God; he is a " merciful God; and peculiarly merciful to " his children: and if I am entitled to that " character, moſt ſurely he would never " afflict me with this or that trouble, if it " were not to deliver me from a greater " miſchief."

As our afflictions, thus duly conſidered, have a proper tendency to diſcover the kind- neſs of God towards us in his conduct; ſo they naturally put us in mind of our ſins. If ſo; then it is certain it is *for our profit*, that we are afflicted; and an argument of the divine love, to bring us to repen- tance. This is the way to deliver us from the power of ſin. This is the way to render us conformable to the divine image; which comprehends in it a renunciation of ſin, and

[n] Lam. 3. 33. | [o] Ezek. 33. 11.

a betaking ourſelves to the practice of holineſs. Therefore if affliction reduces us to repentance, it is an argument of the divine love to us; becauſe whom God loves, he brings to repentance: *Whom I love, I rebuke and chaſten*, ſaith the Lord: *be zealous therefore, and repent* [p].

Moreover, the love of God appears in the chaſtening of his people; not only as this is a proper means to make them holy, but in regard of the circumſtances which attend the afflictions he is pleaſed to exerciſe them with: ſuch circumſtances attend their afflictions, as ſhew that they proceed from the hand of a father; and therefore ought to diſpoſe them to act the part of children by their reverence and ſubmiſſion, and acknowledgment of the divine love. For ſometimes, nay generally, he gives us warning before he ſtrikes; either by the motions of his free ſpirit upon our conſciences, when we hear or read his word, or when we ſeriouſly recollect ourſelves; or by ſome diſpenſation of his providence, by which he corrects others within our knowledge. And if he calls, and we will not hear, is it any wonder then that he does correct us; and if a gentler chaſtiſement will not do, that he corrects us more ſeverely? It is certainly a gracious diſcovery of the love of God in that he declares an unwillingneſs to puniſh, and that he is loth to inflict the ſtroke; but that he does it becauſe it is

[p] Rev. 3. 19.

neceſſary

neceſſary for our advantage. He ſays to his people at all times, as to Iſrael of old, *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, O Iſrael? how ſhall I make thee as Admah? how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together* [q]. He ſeems loth to inflict upon us the ſevere ſtrokes of his providence; and oftentimes waits long that we may attend to the gentler methods of chaſtiſement, before he expreſſes his anger in a more ſevere manner. We have reaſon, therefore, to remark the divine love, in proceeding ſo gradually with us; and not bringing upon us ſurpriſing afflictions, without giving us notice or warning to prepare. Thus the Lord ſpeaks by his prophet: *And becauſe I will do this thing, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Iſrael* [r].

And as the Lord gives warnings before; ſo when he ſtrikes his people, there is tenderneſs and compaſſion mixed with the ſtroke. *He hath not dealt with us after our ſins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities* [s]. He does not inflict upon us ſo much as our iniquities have deſerved; for then he would deſtroy us. Therefore we may be thankful to his providence that he chaſtens us here, *that we may not be condemned with the world* [t]. And from hence we may obſerve the divine love in the method of his

[q] Hoſ. 11. 8.
[r] Amos 4. 12.
[s] Pſal. 103. 10.
[t] 1 Cor. 11. 32.

afflicting

afflicting providences. If we would consider our sins, and compare them with our afflictions; this would silence all our repinings, and make us submit ourselves intirely to the divine chastisement: this would make us say with the church in the Lamentations, *Wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?* Lam. 3. 39. Whether the prophet speaks of himself, or personates the church, it is all one to our purpose. See *ver.* 33—36. *For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.* As much as to say; "if we "meet with very unjust treatment from our "enemies, it is not because the Lord de- "lights in afflicting us; for he loves and "treats us as a father." He says, in the 38th verse, *Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good.* Then, *ver.* 39. *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?* Ver. 40. *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.* Ver. 41. *Let us lift up our heart, with our hands, unto God in the heavens.* Ver. 42. *We have transgressed, and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned.* Ver. 43. *Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain; thou hast not pitied.* That is, thou hast acted so remarkably in

the courſe of thy providence, as if thou hadſt no compaſſion: *Thou haſt covered thyſelf with a cloud, that our prayer ſhall not paſs thro'.* But yet obſerve, he ſtill truſts in God: *ver.* 49, 50. *Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaſeth not, without any intermiſſion; till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.* He hoped ſtill the Lord would look down upon him. And you find the emotions of his faith before, in *ver.* 31, 32. *For the Lord will not caſt off for ever. But tho he cauſe grief, yet will he have compaſſion according to the multitude of his mercies. His anger endureth but for a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning* [t].

God does not afflict us after ſo ſevere and terrible a manner as he might have done, nor does he lengthen out the affliction to the degree that he might have done; but he debates with it: and tho the affliction ſometimes may be very great; yet he ſhines into the ſoul with his loving kindneſs, and mixes mercy with affliction. *In the midſt of judgment he remembers mercy* [u]: and this he doth frequently, by giving us ſpiritual conſolations under the greateſt temporal afflictions. So that tho there is his hand to chaſten us, the hand of his juſtice; there is alſo the hand of his mercy to ſupport us, and to revive our ſouls. If *our afflictions abound, our*

[t] Pſal. 30. 5. | [u] Hab. 3. 2.

con-

conſolations oftentimes *much more abound* [v]. Therefore we have reaſon to argue this as the effect of his love. For, if he deprives us of leſſer things, and gives us greater, what reaſon is there of complaint? If he deprives us of temporal things, and refreſhes our ſouls with the joys of a divine and ſpiritual nature; if he is pleaſed to converſe with us by the influences of his free ſpirit, in the loſs of relations, or any worldly comfort; we have cauſe to acknowledge there is faithfulneſs and mercy mix'd with the affliction.

I cannot enumerate to you the various ways whereby God alleviates our troubles, whereby he ſhews his love even in the midſt of affliction. But then, he makes his love appear afterwards with the greateſt evidence; after his people have been corrected and afflicted, when *the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs* are brought forth [w]. Whereas they found, by experience, that *before they were afflicted they went aſtray* [x], but now they have learned his teſtimonies; when they find the good fruits produced in their ſouls thereby, this convinces them that it is *in very faithfulneſs that God chaſtens and afflicts them* [y]. And we are not ſo proper judges of the principles from whence God acts when we are under preſſing trials, as when we come to a deliberate thought;

[v] 2 Cor. 1. 5.
[w] Heb. 12. 11.
[x] Pſal. 119. 67.
[y] *Ver.* 75.

when our minds are calm, and when the providence of God hath let us ſee the conſequence of his afflicting hand, and ſo explained to us what was his deſign, and the principle from which he acted.

Our views are ſo ſhort, we are ſo ignorant, and ſo liable to be tranſported by our paſſions, that we judge unreaſonably and unjuſtly concerning the conduct of God's providence when we are under affliction: but when we are come to ourſelves, when the affliction is ſo far over that we are able to judge calmly of the matter, when we conſider what fruit is brought forth to our ſouls, when we ſee our ſins are mortified, and we are brought to ſubmit to the divine will, and can ſay, *not my will but thy will be done* [z]; when we conſider that our pride, negligence, and oſcitancy are ſubdued, that our graces are quickened, and we are engaged in a more vigorous diſcharge of the various duties of religion; when we find *our affections* are taken off from the things of this world, and *ſettled upon things above*; then we cannot but acknowledge that God *hath in* love and *mercy afflicted us*; and he *hath dealt with us as with children, and not as with ſlaves*; that he hath *chaſtened us for our profit* [a]; not that he took pleaſure in our miſeries and ſorrows, but becauſe he thought it neceſſary for us, for our good and advantage, that we ſhould be afflicted.

[z] Luke 22. 42. | [a] Heb. 12. 10.

If

If we compare our caſe, even in affliction, with that of the proſperous wicked; what a deplorable condition are they in, who are left ſecure in their vices till they drop into everlaſting ruin? Have we not an abundant cauſe to admire the divine mercy and compaſſion, that our heavenly Father will not caſt us off for our tranſgreſſions, but will take care of us to correct us; and will rather afflict us, than ſuffer ſin upon us, which is ſo hurtful to us? Is not this an argument of his paternal love, that as he has adopted us into his family, he is ſo intimately concerned for our welfare, that he will not ſuffer us to go on in ſin, which has ſuch a tendency to alienate us from himſelf and true happineſs; but will awaken us by his providence, that we may have due contrition of mind, and may be reſtored to the manifeſtations of his divine favour, and the light of his countenance?

So that you ſee, whether we conſider the method which God hath uſed with the beſt of men hitherto; or whether we conſider the nature of theſe chaſtenings, how much better they are for us than a ſtate of proſperity, and how well they are adapted to our circumſtances, to make us more holy and more happy here, and to prepare us for heaven, how very advantagious to our ſouls in this world, in order to procure us peace of conſcience, and to make us fit for a better ſtate; eſpecially if we con-

ſider with all, the mixture of mercy which acompanies our afflictions, and compare with all theſe the good conſequences which God hath ſometimes produced upon our ſouls, and which we ſhall ſee in the end will be the product of the afflictions that we labour under, if we are attentive to the voice of God under them: whether we conſider the one or the other, or all theſe things together; we ſhall find that the wiſdom and goodneſs of God evidently appear in his afflicting providences towards us. God *chaſtens every ſon whom he receiveth*, as the apoſtle ſays; *or as a father the ſon, in whom he delighteth.*

Let me make a little improvement of what hath been ſaid, and ſo conclude.

1. This ſhews us how the generality of men miſtake in the opinion they entertain concerning happineſs and miſery; and, conſequently, how they are miſtaken in the judgments they form concerning the providence of God; what a multitude of errors, and thoſe very deſtructive too; how many falſe judgments are made concerning God's dealings with his people. The generality of the world *call the proud happy*; and thoſe *that work wickedneſs are ſet up* [b]. Theſe are the objects of peoples envy; and they count theſe extraordinary happy men; whereas,

[b] Mal. 3. 15.

if

if we take our meaſures according to the account given us in the holy ſcripture, this does not always follow, but oftentimes the contrary. So, on the other hand, what falſe judgments do people make concerning the afflictions which attend the righteous? How many do they look upon as miſerable, who are really happy? for, *bleſſed is the man whom God chaſteneth* [c]; whom he correcteth; who are treated as the children of God, tho they are *chaſtened every morning* [d]. And tho they are accounted the moſt miſerable wretches in the world, if they are the children of God, they are afflicted for their profit; and it is an argument of God's love to them. How wrongly do men judge concerning the divine conduct? *Love and hatred are not known by the things that are done under the ſun* [e]. We cannot ſay that God loves a man and delights in him, becauſe *he is not in trouble like other men* [f]; and that God hates a man, becauſe he is under ſevere affliction and chaſtiſement. But it is very often the contrary: thoſe who are extremely afflicted, are under the tender regard of divine providence; and God ſees it proper for them, for the mortifying their ſins, and advancing them in grace, to conform them to his own likeneſs in holineſs, and to make them everlaſtingly happy.

[c] Pſal. 94. 12.
[d] Pſal. 73. 14.
[e] Eccleſ. 9. 1.
[f] Pſal. 73. 5.

Hereafter all theſe difficulties of providence will be explained: then it ſhall appear who were the miſerable, and who the happy men. Theſe obſcurities of providence will paſs away; and the whole world will know who were the perſons that God delighted to honour with his paternal affection, tho they were grievouſly afflicted in this world, deſolate, forſaken; *of whom the world was not worthy.* Tho they have met with the worſt treatment from the hands of men, and tho *the hand of God hath touched them*; yet in the end it will be manifeſt, that their wiſe and gracious father has improved their ſouls in humility, reſignation, faith, and hope thereby: and all theſe improvements of grace ſhall be then abundantly rewarded. Thus their afflictions ſhall brighten and enrich their crown of glory: they are afflicted, that they may be like God in holineſs, that ſo they may be made like him in happineſs alſo.

Let us have a care therefore of making falſe judgments concerning others, or ourſelves. How are people apt to conclude, becauſe ſuch a man is in greater affliction than others, therefore he muſt be a greater ſinner than other men: as the Jews, concerning the man that was born blind; *Maſter*, ſaid they, *who did ſin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind* [g]? It ſeems they held

[g] John 9. 2.

the

the Pythagorean notion of tranſmigration of ſouls: therefore they aſked whether this man had ſinned; this man in another body, that he was born blind? Our Saviour alſo ſpeaks of *thoſe on whom the tower of Siloam fell*, and *thoſe whoſe blood Pilate mingled with their ſacrifices, that they were not greater ſinners than others* [h]. Therefore we muſt take care that we do not paſs a wrong judgment upon the caſe of thoſe who are moſt afflicted in this world. The barbarous people, on whoſe coaſt the apoſtle Paul was caſt, when they ſaw the viper on his hand, ſaid, *no doubt this man is a murderer; whom, tho he hath eſcaped the ſea, yet vengeance ſuffereth not to live* [i]. As if, becauſe an affliction befals a man in the courſe of God's providence, it muſt needs be that he was a greater criminal than other people. And you ſee the ſame people preſently ran into another extreme. When he ſhook the viper off, and received no harm; they immediately *changed their minds, and ſaid that he was a God* [k].

2. As we muſt have a care of raſh judgment concerning others; ſo we muſt have a care of miſinterpreting the providence of God towards ourſelves. We may not judge, becauſe we have been, and are exerciſed with many and great afflictions, that therefore God hath no reſpect for us; for thus we may *condemn the generation of the juſt* [l],

[h] Luke 13. 2.
[i] Acts 28. 4.
[k] *Ver.* 6.
[l] Prov. 17. 15.

the

the beſt of men that ever have been in the world: we are not to conclude from the greatneſs of our afflictions that our ſins are greater than the ſins of others, who are not ſo afflicted as we are; for then we may deny what is really true; deny what God hath done for our ſouls, and deny what he hath done for many excellent perſons whoſe examples are recorded in the holy ſcriptures. It is the ſafeſt way indeed to make this judgment, that there would no affliction befall us if it were not for our ſins: ſo as the Jews us'd to ſay when they were afflicted, there were ſome grains of the golden calf in their affliction. But let us not imagine that God does not love us, becauſe he chaſtiſeth us for our tranſgreſſions; ſince his end and deſign is, *that he may take away our ſins*, which are the moſt hurtful and prejudicial to us. *By this therefore ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged: and this is all the fruit, to take away his ſin* [m]. Seeing God afflicts us leſs than we deſerved; and ſeeing it goes againſt him to afflict us, and he would not do it if we did not make it neceſſary; we ought to conclude that his chaſtiſements are the effects of his love. *How ſhall I give thee up, Epraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, O Iſrael? how ſhall I make thee, as Admah? how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together* [n].

[m] Iſa. 27. 9. | [n] Hoſ. 11. 8.

What

What is more common than for good people to conclude that they are not God's children, becauſe they are afflicted? But you ſhould rather argue the contrary way; "God would not afflict me, but I ſhould be "left to go on in my ſins, if I were not his "child, if I belonged not to his family. "I am therefore *now chaſtened, that I might* "*not be condemned with the world*[o]." Endeavour to make a due improvement of afflictions, and by no means cenſure the divine hand that lays them on. As on the one hand, it is a ſtupid thing to be inconſiderate, and neglect a due obſervation of the hand of God in our afflictions; ſo, on the other, it is a dangerous thing to *faint under them*, and to *be weary when we are corrected by him:* we ſhould rather learn hereby to depend upon his providence, and ſubject ourſelves intirely to his will.

3. If the caſe be ſo with reſpect to the diſpenſations of God's providence, as you have heard; and tho we be the favourites of heaven, we muſt not expect to paſs thro' this world without affliction, and indeed it would be a ſad ſign upon us if we did; then let this teach us to aſpire after a better ſtate, to look after ſolid happineſs and ſatisfaction in a better world. We are here as ſo many pilgrims and ſtrangers, in a ſtate of mourning becauſe of our ſins. But let us not be diſ-

[o] 1 Cor. 11. 32.

couraged:

couraged: there will be a ſtate of pleaſure; there will be a ſtate of reſt; there will be a ſtate of ſecurity and happineſs hereafter. It is worth our while to walk circumſpectly while we are here; to walk here with holy fear and trembling, to watch againſt our ſins, to conſult the providence of God continually, to yield ourſelves to the chaſtiſements he inflicts, having our eyes upon the peace and happineſs that is before us. We are children; that is our happineſs. But we are minors; we cannot conduct ourſelves: therefore God will not leave us to ourſelves: he takes us under his immediate care and conduct; and we ſhall ere long be brought to a perfect ſtate of happineſs. Therefore let us not, on the one hand, *deſpiſe the chaſtiſements of God*, nor, on the other hand, *faint when we are rebuked of him.*

SER-

SERMON X.

Chriſt conſider'd under the character of the Lamb of God.

Preach'd at

PINNERS-HALL, Jan. 20. 1704-5.
on a ſacramental occaſion.

JOHN i. 29.

The next day John ſeeth Jeſus coming unto him, and ſaith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world.

The firſt SERMON on this text.

EVER ſince ſin entred into the world, God hath been pleaſed to make known, in ſome degree, his deſign of ſending the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who *appeared in the fulneſs of time, to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf* [p]. He was made known

[p] Heb. 9. 6.

in

in the Old Teſtament by the prophets, the meſſengers of God, who aſſured the church that this glorious perſon would come in the due and proper time to this great end and purpoſe: he was the object of the hope of the patriarchs and prophets, and the whole church under the Old Teſtament: and he is the object of our faith under the new. They looked forward upon him as a Saviour that was to come; they *waited*, as 'tis ſaid of Simeon, *for the conſolation of Iſrael* [q]; that is, the coming of the Meſſiah: and we look back upon the ſame Saviour as already come. We build upon the ſame foundation: as they believed in a Chriſt to come; ſo we believe in him as already come, having *once for all made himſelf a ſacrifice for our ſins* upon the croſs [r]. As this was a matter of the higheſt importance, and therefore revealed by the prophets in ſeveral ages, with divers degrees of clearneſs, and more and more evidently, by how much the nearer his coming approached; ſo John the baptiſt, who was the great forerunner of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſpoke of him after a more expreſs and particular manner than any others; and, being contemporary with him, knew how to point at the perſon who was to perform the great work of delivering ſinners, and to endure the ſufferings of the croſs to that end. The dignity of our Saviour's perſon was

[q] Luke 2. 25. | [r] Heb. 7. 27.

ſuch,

ſuch, that it was fit he ſhould be uſhered in by a forerunner. And accordingly John the baptiſt was born a little before him, and entred into his miniſtry before Chriſt; becauſe his office was to declare the immediate coming of the Son of God. On this account our Saviour declares, that *among thoſe that were born of women, there was not a greater prophet than John the baptiſt* [f]. Tho he did no miracle, yet his office was ſo much the greater, becauſe he was the immediate forerunner of the Redeemer.

The Words of our text declare the character that John gave of our bleſſed Saviour, and of the great work he was to do. The former part of the verſe I need not inſiſt on, becauſe it points only at the time. *The next day John ſeeth Jeſus coming unto him, and ſaith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the World.* The Phariſees and Scribes had been interrogating John concerning his miniſtry; concerning his meſſage, and the character he bore: they wanted to know what he pretended to be, for they found ſomething extraordinary in his miniſtration, Ver. 19. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews ſent prieſts and Levites from Jeruſalem, to ask him, who art thou?* Ver. 20. *And he confeſſed, and denied not; but confeſſed, I am not the Chriſt.* They were in expectation of the coming of the Meſſias about that time: and John appear-

[f] Luke 7. 28.

ing

ing as a perſon of extraordinary piety and ſelf-denial, there being ſuch eminent characters on his miniſtry, and the manner of his life and converſation, that convinced them he was a prophet; they imagin'd that this was the Meſſias. But John confeſſed that it was not ſo: *He denied not, but confeſſed, I am not the Chriſt. They asked him, what then; art thou Elias? and he ſaid, I am not; art thou that prophet? and he anſwered, no* [r]. It was propheſied by Malachi, that *before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, Elijah the prophet ſhould come, and ſhould turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt* [s]: which great work is, Mat. 17. 11. deſcribed by the phraſe of *reſtoring all things*. The Jews therefore ſuppoſed either that this was Elias raiſed from the dead; or elſe that the ſoul or ſpirit of Elias, by tranſmigration, had paſſed into another body. It appears that many of them entertain'd that opinion of the tranſmigration of ſouls: therefore the diſciples of our Lord, from this notion they had received among the Jews, aſked him concerning the man who was blind from his birth, *whether for his ſins, or the ſins of his parents, he was born blind* [t]? Now, how could it be for his ſins, unleſs he had committed ſins before he was born? They imagined therefore that he might have com-

[r] John 1. 21.
[s] Mal. 4. 5, 6.
[t] John 9. 1, 2.

mitted ſins before he was born, and for which his ſoul was caſt into another body. This was the opinion of the Pythagorean Philoſophers, and was become common among the Jews. On this account therefore they aſked John, *whether he was Elias?* But you hear what John anſwered them; *I am not: art thou that prophet then? and he anſwered them, no.* They might poſſibly apprehend, that when John ſaid he was not Elias, he meant that his body was not the ſame; his body was not raiſed from the dead. *But art thou that prophet*, haſt thou his ſoul? no, he anſwered, that he was not that prophet. *Then ſaid they unto him who art thou, that we may give an anſwer to them that ſent us? what ſayeſt thou of thyſelf? And he ſaid, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, make ſtrait the way of the Lord, as ſaid the prophet Iſaiah*[t]. That is, I am he of whom the prophet Iſaiah ſpeaks, when he propheſies of the forerunner of Chriſt. *And they which were ſent were of the Phariſees; and they asked him, and ſaid unto him, why baptizeſt thou then, if thou be not that Chriſt, nor Elias, neither that prophet*[u]? This text, by the way, overturns the notion of thoſe who imagine that baptiſm, as it is an ordinance to be uſed in the church of Chriſt, was a cuſtom among the Jews before the revelation of the goſpel. If it had been a former cuſtom a-

[t] John 1. 22, 23. [u] *Ver.* 24, 25.

mong the Jews to baptize thoſe who were proſelyted to their religion; then they would not at all have wondred that John ſhould undertake to baptize. But they, by the novelty of that practice, and ſomething more than common in his miniſtry, ſaw that he pretended to be more than an ordinary prophet; and therefore they aſked him, why he baptized. *John anſwered them, ſaying, I baptize with water: but there ſtands one among you whom you know not; he it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me; whoſe ſhoes latchet I am not worthy to unlooſe* [w]. "I "baptize with water, but there is one a- "mong you, there is one born or grown up, "there is one going to preach and to publiſh "his own doctrine among you, who is "greater than I. I am not worthy to looſe "his ſhoes, to do the meaneſt ſervice for "him; and am only ſent before to proclaim "his coming." Thus humbly does he ſpeak of himſelf. *Theſe things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John ſeeth Jeſus coming unto him, and ſaith, behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world.* After John had declared that he was not the Meſſias, but that the Meſſias was another perſon, and one who was amongſt them; the next day he tells them who this perſon was: ſeeing Chriſt coming to him, he directs them

[w] *Ver.* 26, 27.

to

to him. *Behold*, ſays he, *this is the lamb of God, that takes away the ſin of the world.* Where you have two things in general.

I. The character which John the baptiſt gives our Saviour: he calls him *the lamb of God.*

II. The declaration he makes of the end and deſign of Chriſt's coming into the world under that character; *to take away the ſin of the world.*

I. The character John the baptiſt gives our Saviour; *Behold the lamb of God.* This is a name frequently applied to Chriſt by the evangeliſt John. As he repreſents the baptiſt thus ſpeaking of our Lord in the text; ſo alſo after the ſame manner, *ver.* 35, 36. of this chapter: *Again, the next day after, John ſtood, and two of his diſciples: and looking upon Jeſus as he walked, he ſaith, behold the lamb of God.* And as in his goſpel, ſo alſo in the book of the Revelation he very often ſpeaks of Chriſt by the ſame deſcription; even after our Saviour was aſcended and exalted to the glory of heaven: Rev. 5. 6. *And I beheld, and lo, in the midſt of the throne, and of the four beaſts, and in the midſt of the elders, ſtood a lamb, as it had been ſlain, having ſeven horns, and ſeven eyes, which are the ſeven ſpirits of God ſent forth into all the earth. Seven horns*, to ſignify the perfection of power; and *ſeven eyes* to ſignify the perfection of wiſ-

dom. So again, *ver.* 13. *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are in them, heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever.* That is, to the Father and to the Son. And in the 6th chapter, ver. 1. *I ſaw when the lamb opened one of the ſeals.* And again in the 15th and 16th verſes of the ſame chapter: *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and ſaid to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand?* That is, the wrath of Chriſt, when he ſhall come to judge the world. Again, in the 7th chapter, and 9th verſe: *After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtood before the throne, and before the lamb.* And in the 14th verſe: *And he ſaid to me, theſe are they which came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb.* Which puts it beyond exception, that this character is given to Chriſt in this book. So in the 16th and 17th verſes: *They ſhall hunger*

hunger no more, neither thirſt any more, neither ſhall the ſun light on them, nor any heat. For the lamb which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes. In ſeveral other places of the ſame Book, you find ſtill the ſame character given to our bleſſed Lord: *chap.* 12. 11. *And they overcame him,* that is, the dragon, *by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their teſtimony. And they loved not their lives unto the death.* Chap. 13. 8. *And all that dwell upon the earth ſhall worſhip him,* that is, the beaſt, *whoſe names are not written in the book of life, of the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world:* that is, ſlain in the purpoſe of God. *Chap.* 14. *ver.* 4. *Theſe are they,* ſpeaking of the redeemed, *which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins: theſe are they which follow the lamb whitherſoever he goeth: theſe were redeemed from amongſt men, being the firſt fruits unto God, and to the lamb.* And, *ver.* 10. ſpeaking of the torment of the wicked: *The ſame ſhall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he ſhall be tormented with fire and brimſtone in the preſence of the holy angels, and in the preſence of the lamb.* Chap. 15. 3. *And they ſhall ſing the ſong of Moſes, the ſervant of God, and the ſong of the lamb.* That is, they ſhall celebrate the glory of Chriſt, as well as that of God

the Father. You find the ſame character farther given our bleſſed Lord in the 21ſt chapter: the church is there called *the bride, the lamb's wife*, ver. 9. and, *ver.* 22. *And I ſaw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the lamb, are the temple of it.* And in the 22d chapter, *ver.* 1. *And he ſhewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as cryſtal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the lamb.* Ver. 3. *And there ſhall be no more curſe: but the throne of God, and of the lamb ſhall be in it; and his ſervants ſhall ſerve him.*

I cite ſo many of theſe paſſages together, that I may obſerve, from hence, how this apoſtle delights to give this title to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. There is ſomething peculiar in the writings of each of the apoſtles. Of the apoſtle John it is remarked, that he ſpeaks more of love, and of the charge Chriſt gave his diſciples to love one another; and gives a larger account of the exhortations our Lord gave them, and the ſupplications he, on that occaſion, made to heaven for them, all which were full of tenderneſs and compaſſion, than any other of the evangeliſts. For tho God makes uſe of the graces of good men, and of their gifts as he pleaſes; yet there is a conſiderable variety: ſome are more eminent for one thing, and ſome for another. This apoſtle's heart ſeems to have been impreſſed with a peculiar ſenſe of the love of Jeſus Chriſt, in giving himſelf up to

die

die for ſinners. And as he was his ſpecial favourite who lean'd upon his boſom as he ſat at meat; ſo he declares himſelf to be deeply affected with the great love of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt towards ſinners. Moreover, he was a witneſs of Chriſt's ſufferings to the laſt; for when the other diſciples forſook him and fled, he ſtood by the croſs and ſaw him bleed and die there: therefore there muſt be a ſtrong impreſſion of love made upon his mind. He frequently calls Chriſt the *lamb*, as being mindful of the ſacrifice of himſelf, which he ſaw him offer up with ſo much meekneſs and patience on the croſs. But let us conſider the reaſon why this character is given to our Lord Jeſus more particularly; *behold the lamb of God:* why he is called a *lamb*, and why the *lamb of God.*

1. Why he is called a lamb. He is called *a lamb* on the account of his ſufferings; and on the account of the manner of his ſufferings.

(1.) On the account of his ſufferings. As ſoon as ſacrifices were inſtituted, thoſe you ſee of the flock were offered. *Abel brought of the firſtlings of his flock* [x]. The firſt account we have of ſacrifices is of ſuch an offering as this: and this may be the reaſon why Chriſt is ſaid to be *ſlain from the foundation of the world* [y]; not only was he deſign'd to be a

[x] Gen. 4. 4.

[y] Rev. 13. 8.

ſacrifice, but, at the firſt celebration of ſacrifices that we read of, Chriſt was prefigured by the offering of the lamb; as in Abel's ſacrifice, which was ſo acceptable to God.

When our Lord's ſufferings were typified by Iſaac, the danger whereunto we were brought by ſin was ſignified by Iſaac's being bound, and laid upon the altar, and upon the wood; and the ſacrificing knife almoſt at his throat: and then a ram was found caught in a thicket, which was ſacrificed inſtead of him. This, I ſay, was to repreſent the danger we were in becauſe of our ſins. The ſword of juſtice hanging over our heads ready to execute us; and, behold, God provides himſelf a lamb, whoſe ſacrifice ſhould be ſufficient to make atonement for our ſins. So Abraham ſaid to Iſaac, *God will provide himſelf a lamb. Behold the fire and the wood*, ſays Iſaac; here is proviſion made, every thing ready; *but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? God*, ſays Abraham, *will provide himſelf a lamb* [z]. Thus our Lord Jeſus was eminently repreſented by that ſacrifice, which was ſubſtituted in the room of Iſaac, when he was reſcu'd from death.

Again; the paſchal lamb, at the coming of the children of Iſrael out of Egypt, was one of the moſt eminent types under the Old Teſtament. John might well call him *the lamb of God* on that account. Had I

[z] Gen. 22, 7, 8.

time,

time, I might more particularly ſhew you how our Lord was typified by this inſtitution: however, I think it is very evident that the deliverance of the children of Iſrael from Egypt, upon the occaſion of the lamb's being offered, and being eaten after ſuch a manner as is deſcribed by Moſes [a], ſignifies our deliverance from a ſtate of ſervitude; from a ſtate of ſin and miſery. The paſſing over the families where the paſchal lamb was ſlain, ſignifies God's withholding his judgments from thoſe who are intereſted in the blood of Jeſus. And the ſprinkling the blood of the lamb upon the door-poſts, ſignifies that nothing could guard and ſecure us from the ſword of vengeance but the ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, and the effuſion of his blood. The roaſting of the lamb, was to repreſent the torments which Chriſt endured upon the croſs. The roaſting of it whole, the perfection of our Saviour's ſacrifice. The eating thereof with bitter herbs, was to ſignify the bitterneſs of thoſe ſufferings which Chriſt felt; and that contrition and humiliation of mind, which becomes us when we partake of the bleſſings our Saviour hath purchaſed: for it is impoſſible to be intereſted therein without repentance and faith. Theſe, and other particular circumſtances relating to the paſchal lamb, ſhew how well our Lord was thereby prefigured. So like-

[a] Exod. 12.

wiſe

likewiſe in thoſe ſacrifices which were daily offered among the Jews, all circumſtances concur to ſignify how fit this title was to be given to our bleſſed Lord; the *lamb of God*. It is as much as to ſay, "Behold him who "is the antitype of all the ſacrifices under "the law."

(2.) By our Saviour's being called the *lamb of God*, is ſignified the manner of his ſuffering. Theſe creatures are not ſo tumultuous and noiſy as other animals are, when they are ſeized and brought to the ſlaughter; but bear their death after ſuch a manner as renders them fit to repreſent patience and meekneſs. Therefore our Lord is compared to this creature on this account; as you ſee in the 53d of Iſaiah: which is applied to our bleſſed Redeemer in the New Teſtament. In the 6th verſe of that chapter we are compared to ſheep for our going aſtray. *All we like ſheep have gone aſtray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* And he is compared to a ſheep for his patience and meekneſs, in the verſe following: *He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth.* The patience and meekneſs of our Saviour under his great ſufferings, gave the prophet occaſion to repreſent him by this compariſon. And John the baptiſt takes notice of Chriſt under this

this character of a *lamb*, undoubtedly on the account of the ſufferings he was to undergo, and on the account of the manner of his behaviour under them, which would be like a lamb; *a lamb brought to the ſlaughter; or as a ſheep dumb before his ſhearers, ſo he would not open his mouth.* But,

2. Why is he called *the lamb of God?* This is by way of diſtinction, and dignity; to ſhew that he was a very remarkable perſon indeed, the perſon whom God had deſign'd and conſtituted to be the antitype of thoſe offerings and ſacrifices under the law, the meſſenger of God, a ſacrifice of God's providing. *I have found a ranſom* [b], ſays the Almighty: *God will provide himſelf a lamb* [c], ſays Abraham. This is *the lamb of God*, a lamb of God's providing; that was typified by the others which were inſtituted and provided under the Old Teſtament. *The ſacrifices of God are a broken heart*, ſays the pſalmiſt: *a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe* [d]. The other ſacrifices, the ſacrifices of beaſts, were indeed inſtituted by God; but there was no excellency in theſe ſacrifices, in compariſon to the ſacrifice of a broken heart; for God deſpiſed all the ſacrifices of beaſts, if there was not contrition of mind in the perſons who offered them. And then in regard of making atonement for ſin, they were but typical of

[b] Job 33. 24.
[c] Gen. 22. 8.
[d] Pſal. 51. 17.

our

our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is the ſacrifice of God. Chriſt was a ſacrifice ſent of God, of his chooſing and ordaining, to make ſatisfaction for ſin; *to take away the ſin of the world. Sacrifice and offerings thou wouldſt not*, ſays Chriſt in the 40th Pſalm. *Then ſaid I, lo I come to do thy will, O God. In the volume of thy book it is written of me* [e]. God rejected thoſe ſacrifices as to any real atonement they could make: *for it is impoſſible the blood of bulls, and goats, ſhould take away ſin* [f]. But this is the ſacrifice of God, *the lamb of God*; a ſacrifice which he accepts: for he declared himſelf well-pleaſed with his Son's undertaking, when he enter'd upon his work. *This is my beloved ſon, in whom I am well pleaſed* [g]. And in that eminent prophecy of what he was to perform, which we have recorded in the 53d of Iſaiah, God declares himſelf well-pleaſed with this ſacrifice. When his ſufferings are ſpoken of by the prophet, and that *his ſoul ſhould be made an offering for ſin*; 'tis added, *He ſhall ſee his ſeed, he ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand. He ſhall ſee of the travel of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied: by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many* [h]. This is a ſacrifice that will make an effectual atonement.

He might be called *the lamb of God* likewiſe in regard of his near alliance to the

[e] Pſal. 40. 6, 7.
[f] Heb. 10. 4.
[g] Mat. 3. 17.
[h] *Ver.* 10, 11.

Father:

Father: not only a lamb of his providing, ordain'd by him as a ſacrifice, and accepted by him; but in a peculiar ſenſe, his being his own ſon, of the ſame nature with the Father in regard to his divinity, and miraculouſly produced in regard of his humanity.

Having thus explain'd the terms, and ſhewn how they refer to the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the manner of his undergoing thoſe ſufferings; I come now more particularly to diſcourſe of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt under the character of a *lamb ſlain*, a lamb made a ſacrifice. And as ſome of you are this evening to partake of the ſupper that is inſtituted as a memorial of Chriſt's ſufferings; ſo I ſhall briefly ſet before you, as the time will allow me, the greatneſs of thoſe ſufferings of our Saviour, who was ordain'd *to bear our ſins in his own body upon the croſs* [i]. The character that is here given him, repreſents to us his ſufferings as thoſe of a *lamb ſlain* for us [k]. The types under the law endured death; ſo *the lamb of God* hath ſuffered death: he hath endured ſufferings agreeable to the greatneſs of his love, and to the greatneſs of his undertaking, which was to make ſatisfaction for ſin. His ſufferings will appear therefore to us very great, and that he deſerves the character of the *lamb ſlain*, or the ſacrifice; if we conſider,

[i] 1 Pet. 2. 24. [k] Rev. 13. 8.

1. The

1. The ſufferings themſelves.

2. The occaſion of his ſufferings.

3. The character of the perſon who endured theſe ſufferings; what, and how great he was. And,

4. From whom he ſuffered thoſe great torments and miſeries which he underwent.

1. Let us take a view of the ſufferings themſelves. The ſcripture gives you an account of them. The evangeliſts tell you after what manner Chriſt was taken, arraigned, accuſed, condemned, and put to death; and what were the circumſtances of his ſufferings upon that occaſion, which greatly aggravated them. The apoſtles preached *Chriſt crucified* [1]: and this is a great part of their doctrine, and the main point thereof; all the other parts of the chriſtian religion have a reference thereunto, and center therein. And John, in the revelation, beheld him as a *lamb ſlain*; and conſidered all his glory, and the glory of his church, as reſulting from the merit of his blood. It is indeed a matter of the greateſt conſideration. Let us therefore take notice of theſe ſufferings of our Lord, and we ſhall find that they were very great; in that they were very numerous, and extended to all the capacities that he had of ſuffering; and very great in regard of the intenſeneſs of the ſorrow, of the pain, and of the torment that he endured.

[1] 1 Cor. 1. 23.

They were great, I ſay, in that he ſuffered many things at once, and by the various capacities he had of ſuffering. He ſuffered in his ſoul, and he ſuffered in his body. All the faculties of his mind were filled with affliction and torment: and the like may be ſaid of his body too. God is pleaſed in afflicting his people in this world, to mix abundance of mercy oftentimes with their trials; and yet we find one affliction, if it be great, very hard to be endured. But what was the ſuffering of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, when the capacities of his ſoul and body were filled with torment and pain; with ſorrow and miſery? he tells his diſciples, at the approach of his ſufferings, that *his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death.* And the pſalmiſt, ſpeaking prophetically of the ſorrows of our Lord, ſays, *reproach broke his heart* [m]: *his heart was melted like wax, in the midſt of his bowels* [n]. Which words repreſent the anguiſh of his mind, as well as the agonies of his body. There muſt needs be abundance of ſorrow, that could throw him into *a ſweat of blood* [o], before his enemies laid hands upon him, while he was ruminating upon his ſufferings in the garden; and while his ſoul languiſhed under the mighty burden ſo far, that it was neceſſary that an angel ſhould come to

[m] Pſal. 69. 20.
[n] Pſal. 22, 14.
[o] Luke 22. 44.

comfort

comfort him. Not that our Redeemer had any criminal backwardneſs, any unreaſonable or ſinful fear: but this was to ſhew the infirmity and weakneſs of human nature; and that our Lord was made mortal, that he might be capable of ſinking and dying under the weight of ſufferings, which were to be laid upon him. The ſorrows of his ſoul were capable of greatly afflicting his body; and it is ſaid he was *crucified in weakneſs* [p]: Here was a natural frailty, frailty of human nature, tho there was no criminal or moral infirmity that did attend him. He knew what it was to be filled with ſorrow: *He endured the ſhame of the croſs* [q], the reproaches thereof. And that which is a great conſolation to perſons under ſufferings, the ſupports of the divine hand, our Lord was ſo far deprived of, that he was to have no ſenſible comfort from the refreſhing preſence of his Father; therefore he cries out as *forſaken of him* [r]. I only ſpeak of this at preſent to ſhew you, that as there were various ſufferings upon his mind, ſo likewiſe upon his body. He was not only abuſed with words, but with blows, in the open view of all ſpectators that throng'd about the public courts of Judgment. He was buffeted and ſpit upon: which ſhews the great barbarity and cruelty of his perſecutors. He had a mock robe of royalty put on, a reed in his hand inſtead

[p] 2 Cor. 13. 4.
[q] Heb. 12. 2.
[r] Mat. 27. 46.

of a ſceptre, and a crown of thorns upon his head. He was conducted without the gates of Jeruſalem, to the place of common execution, as a publick ſpectacle, in the view of all that came to Calvary to ſee him ſuffer. And there his head being crowned with thorns, his hands, and his feet, and his ſide, were all pierced; that it might appear there was an intire effuſion of his blood. For he was to be offered a ſacrifice; and that muſt be by ſheding of blood. Thus abandon'd by his friends, and purſued cruelly by his enemies, he endured the moſt ignominious and painful treatment. But it is impoſſible to deſcribe the ſufferings of our Lord in terms ſo proper and elegant as thoſe in which the Holy Spirit has repreſented them; particularly by the pen of the pſalmiſt, and the prophet Iſaiah. In the 22d pſalm: *I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and deſpiſed of the people. All they that ſee me, laugh me to ſcorn: they ſhoot out the lip, they ſhake the head; ſaying, he truſted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, ſeeing he delighteth in him* [f]. *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midſt of my bowels. My ſtrength is dried up, like a potſherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou haſt brought me unto the duſt of death. For dogs have compaſſed me, the aſſembly of*

[f] *Ver.* 6, 7. 8.

the wicked have encloſed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and ſtare upon me. They part my garments among them, and caſt lots for my veſture [s]. And in like manner in the 52d and 53d chapters of Iſaiah, you have a deſcription of the ſufferings of our Saviour. *Behold, my ſervant ſhall deal prudently, he ſhall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. Many were aſtonied at thee; his viſage was ſo marr'd more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men* [t]. *He ſhall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor comelineſs; and, when we all ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not. Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our ſorrows: yet we did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities* [u], &c. The death of Chriſt was moſt ignominious, painful and lingering: he was wounded in the moſt nervous parts of the body, and, conſequently, thoſe which were moſt ſenſible of pain; his hands and feet were pierced with nails. This, indeed, was ordinary and common ſo far. But then there were circumſtances relating

[s] *Ver.* 14——18.
[t] *Chap.* 52. 13, 14.
[u] *Chap.* 53. 2——5.

to

to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as will appear hereafter, which made his ſufferings greater than ordinary. But it already appears that they were not only very numerous, but exceeding grievous, as to the kind of them, and intenſe as to the degree, eſpecially the ſufferings of the cruel and curſed death of the croſs, with common malefactors; and thus to be expoſed, and die in the midſt of a multitude of ſpectators with ſo much ſhame and ignominy. But let us conſider,

2. The occaſion of the ſufferings of our Lord. And this will ſtill make further evident to us the mighty aggravations which attended them, above the ſufferings of others.

(1.) On the part of man. The occaſion of Chriſt's ſufferings was falſe accuſation. And it muſt needs have been a great and uncommon ſorrow and trouble to one that loved holineſs and purity, as our Lord did, to be accuſed of the groſſeſt and moſt enormous crimes in the world. Therefore he complains by the prophet, *falſe witneſſes did riſe up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not of*[v]. *He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth*[w]. But notwithſtanding the purity of his converſation, and that *he went about doing good*[x], his enemies falſly accuſed him, and endeavoured to repreſent him as the moſt odious of men: and by exciting the people to deſire his crucifixion, and to prefer

[v] Pſal. 35. 11.
[w] 1 Pet. 2. 22.
[x] Acts 10. 38.

Barabbas's life before his, they declare him the greater malefactor of the two [y]. 'Tis true, that innocency is a great ſupport to a man under ſufferings, when he conſiders that he ſhall be cleared before the tribunal of God, tho he be falſly accuſed and condemned by men. But, in itſelf, it is a great trial to one who loves holineſs and purity, to one who regards *a good name better than precious ointment* [z], as the wiſe man ſpeaks, to be eſteemed guilty of the things which his righteous ſoul abhors. It is part of a man's duty to value a good name; and a virtuous mind will always value it: and therefore it muſt be a great occaſion of ſorrow, for one ſo perfectly innocent as our bleſſed Lord, to be ſo ſcandalouſly and falſly accuſed. By how much the greater the crimes were which were laid to his charge, the greater muſt be his ſuffering. But our Saviour being ſubſtituted as a ſacrifice, as we ſhall ſhew hereafter, fell under theſe circumſtances. And, whereas others are comforted by extraordinary ſupports; this was the time of his being deſerted, and left without comfort: which made him cry out, *my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me* [a]. If you aſk, what were the crimes laid to his charge; why, they are the greateſt, and the moſt reproachful in the world. They alledged that he was *an impoſtor*, that he was *a blaſ-*

[y] Mat. 15. 11.
[z] Eccleſ. 7. 1.
[a] Mat. 27. 46.

phemer,

phemer, and *a factious perſon*; that he went to undermine the government under which he lived, and, under a ſpecious pretence, to ſet up another.

That he was *an impoſtor*, in the circumſtances in which it was charged upon our Saviour, was certainly one of the vileſt accuſations that could be. They ſaid that he was *not the ſon of God* [b], as he made himſelf to be; and, conſequently, that he would, in the name of God, eſtabliſh a doctrine that was not true. This was to ſubvert religion itſelf, and to put the ſouls of men out of the way of ſalvation. The Jews knew that their religion was received of God: and, by accuſing Chriſt as an impoſtor, they repreſented him as one that went about to ſubvert the true religion, and to eſtabliſh his own fancies and inventions inſtead thereof. Our Lord came indeed to aboliſh ſome part of their religion, that part which was ceremonial and figurative: but the ſubſtance of theſe figures ſtill took place; *the body was of Chriſt* [c], as the apoſtle ſays to the Coloſſians.

Another thing they charge him with is, that he was *a blaſphemer*. Our Lord indeed, in vindication of himſelf, declared that it was true that he was the ſon of God. And conſidering the good proofs he had given that he really was ſo; this aggravates the heinouſneſs of the charge brought againſt him.

[b] John 19. 7. | [c] Col. 2. 17.

Mat. 26. 65. *The high prieſt rent his clothes, ſaying, he hath ſpoken blaſphemy; what further need have we of witneſſes; behold, now ye have heard his blaſphemy.* They would have him guilty of the higheſt blaſphemy in repreſenting himſelf as the ſon of God. And herein lies the greatneſs of his ſufferings; that they ſhould charge him with blaſphemy, when he was really what he declared himſelf to be, and had given ſufficient proof of it.

Then they would ſuggeſt that he was a *factious and ſeditious perſon*; one, who was going about to overturn the government under which he lived, and to ſet up himſelf: therefore they tell Pilate, *he was not Cæſar's friend, if he releaſed Jeſus*[d]. This was to bring an odium upon him from the powers of this world.

Thus they repreſented him as deſigning the deſtruction of mens ſouls, by ſpiritual impoſture; and of their bodies, by engaging them in factions againſt their ſuperiors. Our Lord Jeſus might therefore well complain, that *they laid to his charge things that he knew not*[e]; ſince the religion he preached was founded upon the ſcripture, and he prov'd his miſſion by his miracles; ſince the whole tenor of his life ſhewed his deſign was to do men good, and ſince he particularly laboured to perſuade

[d] John 19. 12. | [e] Pſal. 35. 11.

them

them to be peaceable and faithful in the ſeveral relations they bear to each other. The whole of his doctrine and converſation were becoming his profeſſion as the meſſenger of God. The buſineſs of the Son of God, in this lower world, was to reform and to redeem ſinners. And our Lord Jeſus not only declared that he was the ſon of God, but proved that he was ſo, in that he ratified his miſſion and holy doctrine by the performance of the moſt wonderful and convincing miracles: therefore there was no ground for them to ſay he blaſphemed. Nor was there any colour for the laying of faction and ſedition to his charge. He was ſo far from deſerving an accuſation of this nature, that he ſlipped away from the people when they would have ſet him up a temporal prince [f]; and ſhewed that he was not come to erect a throne, in this world at preſent, any other than in the conſciences of men. There was not the leaſt pretence for faction and ſedition: for our Saviour declared, that inſtead of ſeeking of temporal honour and glory, he came to die, to lay down his life for ſinners; and acted agreeably to the declaration he made.

Thus Chriſt's ſufferings were great, in regard of men, who falſly accuſed him. But they were great, likewiſe,

[f] John 6. 15.

(2.) In regard of the occaſion of them, which God had reſpect unto: namely, the making ſatisfaction for ſin; the meriting of grace and glory for his people; and the ſetting before them the moſt illuſtrious example of patience and meekneſs under his ſufferings.

We may eaſily imagine our Lord's ſufferings were great, when he, who was ſo extraordinary and excellent a perſon, was loaded with ſuch falſe and vile accuſations: but they will appear much greater, if we conſider what was the true deſign of them, on the part of God. He came to lay down his life for ſinners: this abundantly ſhews the greatneſs of his ſufferings. Conſider what is the juſtice of God; what his holineſs: how terrible a puniſhment of ſin that juſtice had threatned, even eternal wrath; the *worm that never dies, and the fire that ſhall never be quenched* [g]. Now, if Chriſt was come to make ſatisfaction for ſin; you may imagine his ſufferings muſt needs be very great, if you conſider what a multitude of ſins were laid upon him, charged upon him by imputation; *who was made ſin for us, that knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him* [h]. And this deſign, that he ſhould be made a ſacrifice, ſhews that his ſufferings muſt needs be extraordinary great: for the hatred of God to ſin, was moſt eminently

[g] Mark 9. 44. [h] 2 Cor. 5. 21.

declared

declared by his ſufferings; what he ſuffered on all accounts conſidered, being equivalent to that eternal miſery which we ought to have endured, and muſt otherwiſe have ſuffered.

Farther, let us conſider the merit of Chriſt's ſufferings: and this will ſhew the greatneſs of them. As ſin is a great evil, and the conſequences of it from which we are delivered are very dreadful; ſo the priviledges to which we are intitled, by the merit of Chriſt's ſufferings, are very great. To be changed and reformed, to have communion with God here, and the enjoyment of him, for ever, a title to crowns and robes, to thoſe glorious manſions which our Lord is gone to prepare, to unſpeakable happineſs and an eternal weight of glory; this is what our bleſſed Redeemer merited by his ſufferings. The price muſt be very great, that procured ſuch a purchaſe: conſequently the ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus, as they were ſatisfactory for ſo much ſin, and meritorious of ſo much good, we may eaſily collect were very great.

Again; according to his character as the great high prieſt, the head of his church, the ruler and governour; the captain of their ſalvation; it was fit he ſhould be *made perfect through ſufferings* [i]: as upon other accounts ſo upon this, that he might ſet them

[i] Heb. 2. 10.

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an example. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is therefore ſet before us as the great object unto whom we are to look under our ſufferings: *looking unto Jeſus*, ſays the author to the Hebrews, *the author and finiſher of our faith; who for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame* [k]. We are to look to him as our great pattern; *He ſuffered, ſetting us an example, that we ſhould walk in his ſteps* [l]. Which ſhews that his ſufferings were extraordinary great; as well as that he behaved himſelf under them after an extraordinary manner. Abraham's great faith is ſet before us as an extraordinary pattern. Our Lord is *the captain of our ſalvation*, and a pattern of ſufferings. Why? Becauſe his ſufferings were extraordinary great, and he behaved himſelf under them after an extraordinary manner. So that ſeeing the deſign of his ſufferings was to make ſatisfaction for ſin, and to merit for us grace and glory, and to make himſelf a pattern fit to be ſet before his people; all theſe characters required that his ſufferings ſhould be very great, and tranſcend the ſufferings of all others whatſoever.

3. If we conſider his perſon; this will ſhew that his ſufferings were extraordinary great. The higher in ſtate and dignity any perſon is, the greater the affliction, if he be brought into a condition of miſery and tor-

[k] Heb. 12. 2. | [l] 1 Pet. 2. 21.

ment.

ment. Our Lord was infinitely high, in regard to his divine nature: and tho that could not ſuffer; yet the human nature being aſſumed unto the divine, his ſufferings may be called the ſufferings of God. Acts 20. 28. *Feed the church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own blood.* He is rewarded, becauſe he ſo deeply humbled himſelf; and *became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs. Therefore hath God highly exalted him,* Phil. 2. 8, 9. Thus the apoſtle ſhews that the dignity of his perſon renders his ſufferings ſo very great. Conſider farther, not only his nature, as God; but his dignity, as mediator. The office he bears, ſhews that his ſufferings muſt have been great in proportion. He ſtood in the gap; and conſequently was to bear the wrath of God as a ſacrifice, as you have heard before, as well as to intercede by his prayers, by the plea of his blood, when once it was ſhed. He was greater than all the prophets, prieſts, and princes too, that ever appeared in the world. For a prince to be treated with the utmoſt ignominy and contempt, to be treated as a malefactor, and to be put to the greateſt torments and miſeries; this is highly reſented amongſt men: by how much more noble the perſon is, by how much the greater his quality and office is, by ſo much the greater are the ſufferings accounted to be. The dignity therefore of our Lord's perſon and office,

office, do certainly very much aggravate his ſufferings.

But farther; if you conſider him in regard of the frame and diſpoſition of his body and ſoul, the ſame thing will reſult to your view. As to the faculties and powers of his ſoul; he was undoubtedly, in that reſpect, made very capable of ſuffering. And his love being exceeding ardent towards God, and towards men; it muſt deeply touch a ſoul ſo formed as his, to ſee men ſinning after ſuch a manner as they did, in the many injuries they offered to him: this made ſo deep an impreſſion upon his pure and tender mind, that he cries out upon the croſs, *Father forgive them; for they know not what they do* [m]. His extraordinary love to God, and to the ſouls of men, made it bitter and grievous to him to ſee ſin at any time committed. And therefore a little before he ſuffered, he *wept over* the iniquities of *Jeruſalem* [n] with tenderneſs and compaſſion: how much more then muſt their moſt brutiſh and aggravated tranſgreſſions affect him in his dying moments? Moreover, the greatneſs of his knowledge increaſed his ſufferings: he knowing before what puniſhment his father had deſigned; knowing what he had undertaken, and that it was neceſſary for him to undergo ſuch a plunge of ſorrows, ſuch a baptiſm of ſufferings [o];

[m] Luke 23. 34.
[n] Luke 19. 41.
[o] Luke 12. 50.

that

that he was to drink of ſo bitter *a cup*, and that it was impoſſible it ſhould *paſs from him* [p]. Neceſſary, becauſe all mankind muſt otherwiſe periſh: and ſuch was the benignity of his gracious ſoul, that he had rather ſuffer a thouſand torments, than that man ſhould go without a redeemer. Certainly the agitations of his mind muſt, on this occaſion, be inexpreſſibly great; tho there was no ſin committed by him, no treachery in his heart, or guile in his mouth, when he was ſurrounded with abuſe and violence in every form, and under the greateſt internal diſtreſs.

If you conſider the texture or frame of his body; being ſent by the father, he had a *body prepared* for ſufferings [q]; it muſt therefore be very capable of ſuffering. And the temperance and abſtemiouſneſs of his life, the regularity of his converſation, muſt render him the more paſſive, the more capable of ſuffering; and that eſpecially, when he was in the vigor of his age. He was not much more than thirty years old when he ſuffered; a time of life when nature is in its greateſt ſtrength, when the ſenſes are moſt lively and vigorous; which muſt encreaſe his pain, and cauſe him to languiſh the longer upon the croſs. And it ſeems his vigor was ſuch, that he hung a conſiderable time without dying; notwithſtanding he

[p] Mat. 20. 22. and Chap. 26. 42.

[q] Heb. 10. 5.

had ſuch extraordinary exerciſes in his ſoul, as well as torments in his body. If we conſider all theſe things together, we ſhall ſoon perceive that the perſon of our Saviour was adapted and diſpoſed for ſuffering, and was capable of it more than any other could poſſibly be. And,

4. Conſider from whom theſe ſufferings came; that there was a conſpiracy of men and devils againſt him: it was *the hour, and power of darkneſs* [r], as our Lord himſelf declares. There were the greateſt efforts of hell; and therefore our Saviour is repreſented by the apoſtle as *triumphing over principalities and powers upon the croſs* [t]. There was the greateſt obſtinacy and malice of his enemies, and the weakneſs and puſillanimity of his friends. One of his diſciples was ſo treacherous as to betray him; another was ſo weak and cowardly as to deny him, and that with curſing and ſwearing; the reſt forſook him, and fled. Thus was our Lord abandoned by them all, and left as it were alone, when his ſufferings came upon him in the moſt tumultuous and terrible manner. Peter indeed had ſaid, *tho all ſhould forſake thee; yet will not I* [s]. Yet this was the perſon who denied him; and was, by the look of his Lord, melted into tears. He had a peculiar tenderneſs for Peter; he ſaw his ſin and fall, and ſaw his grief and ſorrow: and

[r] Luke 22. 53.
[t] Col. 2. 15.
[s] Mat. 26. 33.

all

all this in the midſt of his own diſtreſſes. Theſe things, and the calamities he foreſaw that would befal Jeruſalem, his country, his kindred, the nation in which he was born, and to whom he was allied; all theſe render his ſufferings exceeding great. And, as hath been intimated already, the hand of his father was againſt him: *he made his ſoul an offering for ſin* [t]; *he was ſmitten, ſtricken of God, and afflicted* [u]. And who knows how terrible his ſufferings were on this account? It is true, he knew he was pleaſing his father while ſuffering upon the croſs; yet no doubt, unſpeakable ſorrow and dejection of ſpirit attended him while all conſolation was withholden from him. Our Lord, tho innocent, yet ſtanding in our ſtead, endured, you ſee, moſt wonderful ſufferings upon our account; and was ſo far deſerted of the father, that he had not that conſolation and joy which another might expect in that hour.

Thus have I, as briefly as I well could, given you ſome repreſentation of the greatneſs of our Saviour's ſufferings. Let me make a brief improvement of what has been ſaid, and conclude for the preſent. Thus was *the lamb of God* ſlain, that he might *take away the ſin of the world.* You ſee how well this character ſuits our bleſſed Saviour, who, by ſuch hands, was ſo wounded and tortured in body, endured ſuch infamy and reproach

[t] Iſa. 53. 10. [u] *Ver.* 4.

on

on his character, and ſuch various torments, in his ſoul; and all this with ſo much meekneſs, patience, and reſignation of ſpirit. Hence we ſee,

1. The great love of the father, that he would provide ſuch a lamb. What manner of love is this, that God ſhould *not ſpare his own ſon, but freely give him up to die for us* [v]?

2. You here behold the great love of the Son, that he would not ſpare himſelf, but willingly engaged to become a ſacrifice; and, in due time, offered himſelf upon the croſs. Oh, what is all the love of creatures, in compariſon to the love of God for poor fallen man! *For a good man* [w], *for a friend, ſome would even dare to die* [x]. But who would die for ſinners, for enemies, for rebels? that the Son of God ſhould aſſume human nature to become a ſacrifice for our ſins; what manner of love is this? love that raiſes admiration in the minds of thoſe who conſider it; ſo as that they have reaſon to ſay, *it hath heighths and depths, lengths and breadths that paſs knowledge* [y], and which will be the ſubject of eternal Hallelujahs.

3. What an example does our Saviour hereby ſet us of ſufferings? Is there any room for us to murmur, when under all his torments there was no repining, no

[v] Rom. 8. 32.
[w] Rom. 5. 7.
[x] John 15. 13.
[y] Eph. 3. 18, 19.

indecent

indecent word dropped from him? Should not we behave ourſelves like the followers and diſciples of our great leader and maſter? we, whoſe ſufferings are much leſs, who have deſerved all that we ſuffer, and muſt have endured eternal miſery if our Lord had not ſuffered upon the croſs for us; we, to whom afflictions are ſo neceſſary to make us conformable to the holineſs of God. There is certainly no room for our complaining; and eſpecially when we conſider, that whereas our Saviour was deſerted under his ſufferings, we have the promiſe of the Spirit of God to uphold us under ours, if we apply ourſelves to him as we ought to do.

4. This ſhews us how we ſhould hate and abhor ſin. Shall we put our Saviour to grief again? ſhall we commit ſin, which hath coſt him ſo much pain and torment to expiate? how ungrateful is this! if we love Chriſt, we ſhould hate ſin, which he ſo much hates; and, to redeem us from which, he would endure the painful and ſhameful death of the croſs. We ſhould be revenged upon our iniquities, as the weapons, the inſtruments which ſmote our Lord Jeſus, which wounded him, and ſlew him after ſo cruel a manner.

5. What encouragement is here to poor ſinners, who are burdened under the ſenſe of their ſins, to come to Chriſt for mercy; to come to this *lamb of God*, to *take away* their *ſins*? whoſoever looks to him by

faith, ſhall have eternal life. Here is a ſacrifice; here is the atonement. Here therefore is a *door of hope* opened. This ſhould direct us likewiſe, under all the remaining power of our corruptions, to have recourſe continually to that *fountain which is opened to waſh us from ſin and from uncleanneſs* [z]; *Behold the lamb of God that takes away the ſin of the world.* There is no other oblation, no other ſacrifice but this.

6. How ſhould this endear to us the remembrance of Chriſt's ſufferings; thoſe memorials of his ſufferings we have in the holy ſupper? If we love our Saviour, we ſhould come when he calls us to celebrate his praiſes; we ſhould come hungring and thirſting to his table. If we are negligent, and abſent ourſelves from hence, or come, with cold and indifferent diſpoſitions of mind, don't we thereby diſcover great unkindneſs to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? and how unworthy is it that we ſhould love him ſo little who is ſo infinitely lovely; and to whom we are ſo much obliged? It behoves us therefore, if we wou'd act ſuitably to his character, to the obligations we owe him, and indeed to our own intereſt and advantage, *to ſit under his ſhadow with great delight, that his fruit may be ſweet to our taſte* [a]. You may hear the voice of John the baptiſt, and of our Lord himſelf, as it were, from the table, ſaying,

[z] Zech. 13. 1. | [a] Cant. 2. 3.

behold

behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world. There is the voice of our Lord, the *voice of our beloved himſelf* [b]: for it is he who invites us *to eat of the bread which he hath prepared, and drink of the wine which he hath mingled* [c]; to partake, by faith, of the great things he hath procured and purchaſed for us; to live upon him *who is our life* [d], who is able to ſuſtain us, to feed and nouriſh us, to conſolate and ſtrengthen our ſouls here; and who, after having treated us in the kindeſt manner upon earth, hath provided a nobler and more laſting entertainment for us in the kingdom of heaven. They are happy who are thus treated in a ſtate of grace: but they ſhall be advanced to a much greater degree of happineſs in a ſtate of glory. Here we are invited to feed by faith upon our crucified Redeemer, and to adore *the lamb that was ſlain* [e]; but how much more exalted will our enjoyments and our praiſes be in the kingdom of heaven, when we come to partake of the *marriage-ſupper of the lamb*, and when his church ſhall be *made* entirely *ready* [f], and ſo rendred capable of enjoying a ſtate of perfection in glory?

[b] Cant. 5. 2.
[c] Prov. 9. 5.
[d] Col. 3. 4.
[e] Rev. 5. 12.
[f] Rev. 19. 7, 9.

SERMON XI.

The end of Chriſt's ſufferings conſider'd.

Preach'd at

PINNERS-HALL, Jan. 27. 1704-5.
on a ſacramental occaſion.

JOHN i. 29.

The next day John ſeeth Jeſus coming unto him, and ſaith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the ſin of the world.

The ſecond SERMON on this text.

IN a diſcourſe on the former part of theſe words, I have already given ſome account of the connection of them with what goes before, and explained the meaning of this character that is given to our Lord Jeſus; *the lamb of God.* And now my buſineſs will be to treat of the other part of the words, which ſignify his undertaking.

taking. The great thing this *lamb of God* came about, was *to take away the ſin of the world.* John the baptiſt is the perſon who gives our Lord this character, and this account of the great work he was to do. John the baptiſt, I ſay; who lived in an intermediate diſpenſation, which partook partly of the Old Teſtament, and partly of the New. Partly of the Old Teſtament; becauſe he was born and brought up under that: but partly of the New; becauſe he was Chriſt's immediate forerunner, and did baptize perſons in the name of Jeſus; a new ordinance being inſtituted to uſher in the miniſtration of the Meſſias; and the people who ſubmitted to it being required to make a profeſſion of their faith in Chriſt the Meſſiah, who was now coming to manifeſt himſelf to the world. John refuſed to take that honour to himſelf which the people would have put upon him: for the people not only took him to be a prophet, but imagined he was the Meſſiah, for they expected the coming of the Meſſiah about that time. He thruſts away this honour from himſelf, and tells them he was *not worthy to bear the ſhoes of him that was truly the Chriſt* [g]: and our Lord appearing the next day after John had declared himſelf in this manner, he directs the eyes and the hearts of the people to him, who he had ſaid before was greater than

[g] *Ver.* 27.

himſelf. " There is the great perſon, ſays " he, concerning whom I was ſpeaking. " There is the Meſſiah, the ſaviour of ſin- " ners. *Behold the lamb of God that takes* " *away the ſin of the world.* This is the " perſon of whom I have been ſpeaking, " and to whom I give honour myſelf, and " to whom I direct you to aſcribe it."

I have conſidered the character John gives of our Saviour when he calls him *the lamb of God*; and have ſhewed you he is called a lamb both in reſpect of his ſufferings as a ſacrifice, and in reſpect of the manner of his behaviour under them. In reſpect of his ſufferings as a ſacrifice, he is fitly called *a lamb*; for this was a kind of ſacrifice early inſtituted. The firſt we read of was that of Abel, which typified the Meſſias: *he offered of the firſtlings of his flock* [h]. And you know the paſchal-lamb was another eminent type of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and of his ſufferings. The daily ſacrifice was likewiſe a type of him; the lamb that was offered for the continual burnt offering. Therefore, it was very proper to give our Lord, the antitype of theſe characters, the name of *the lamb of God*. It is as much as to ſay; this is he who is the antitype of all thoſe legal ſacrifices that were offered to God, as prefiguring the true ſacrifice which ſhould be offered *once for all* [i], and to make effectual

[h] Gen. 4. 4. | [i] Heb. 7. 27.

expiation

expiation of guilt; this is *the lamb that was ſlain from the foundation of the world.*[k] I have ſhewn you likewiſe that John the evangeliſt, as well as John the baptiſt, take delight to deſcribe Chriſt under this character; therefore it is often uſed in the book of the Revelation. And the apoſtle Peter uſes the ſame when he tells us, that *we are not redeemed with corruptible things as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a lamb without blemiſh, and without ſpot* [l]. Not only our Lord's ſacrifice, but the manner of his ſufferings are hereby repreſented, according to the remark of the prophet Iſaiah: *He was brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth* [m]; to repreſent the meekneſs, the humility, the patience, the reſignation, wherewith our Lord offered himſelf. I have inſiſted particularly upon his offering himſelf as a ſacrifice, and ſhewn the greatneſs of his ſufferings, as his blood was ſhed upon the croſs; and that under ſeveral heads.

I now proceed to the *undertaking* of our Lord Jeſus, the end and deſign of his ſufferings, which was *to take away the ſin of the world.* And here to avoid miſtakes, I muſt inſiſt particularly upon each of theſe terms. I muſt endeavour to ſhew you,

[k] Rev. 13. 8.
[l] 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.
[m] Iſa. 53. 7.

I. What is ſignify'd by *the world.*
II. What by *the ſin of the world.*
III. *How* our Lord Jeſus Chriſt *takes away the ſin of the world.*

I. What is ſignified by the world. *The world* is a term variouſly uſed in the ſcripture, and in common converſation, as every one knows. Sometimes it ſignifies the whole creation, the whole univerſe. So in the 1ſt of John, it is ſaid, the world was made by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *He came into the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not* [n]. And ſo in ſeveral other places of the ſcripture. Sometimes it ſignifies the inhabitants of the world; and comprehends both angels and men. So our Lord Jeſus ſhall judge the world. *God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world by the man Chriſt Jeſus* [o]. And it is ſaid, *the ſaints ſhall judge the world* [p]. The apoſtle tells us they ſhall *judge angels* as well as men; and no body doubts but our Lord Jeſus Chriſt will have both before his tribunal, both angels and men. Sometimes by *the world* only men are ſignified. And ſo in various places in ſcripture, we find it uſed in ſpeaking of mankind. It is evident the ſins of angels cannot be underſtood by *the ſin*

[n] John 1. 10.
[o] Acts 17. 31.
[p] 1 Cor. 6. 2, 3.

of

of the world [q]: for *God ſpared not the angels that ſinned, but caſt them down to hell; and they are reſerved in chains of darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day* [r]. By *the world* therefore in our text muſt be ſignified the inhabitants of this world: and it muſt not be extended to the inhabitants of the whole univerſe; particularly not to angels, tho they are rational creatures, and have faln; but to the inhabitants of this lower world, for our Lord Jeſus Chriſt did not come to make himſelf an offering for the ſins of angels. *He took not on him the nature of angels*, for he was not to be their redeemer, but it was the nature of men; he was a man of *the ſeed of Abraham* [s], and *of the ſeed of David, according to the fleſh* [t]. But then when we underſtand *the world* to ſignify the inhabitants of this earth, rational creatures that inhabit here, yet it is to be diſtinguiſhed into various acceptations. And here I muſt deſire your particular attention, becauſe the right explication of the text may depend hereupon.

1. Sometimes it is taken univerſally, as you ſee in Rom. 3. 6. *How then ſhall God judge the world.* This muſt comprehend all men, tho it comprehends angels too; for God will judge all men univerſally none excepted. *We muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt* [u]. So in that forecited text,

[q] 2 Pet. 2. 4.
[r] Jude 6.
[s] Heb. 2. 16.
[t] Rom. 1. 3.
[u] 2 Cor. 5. 10.

1 Cor.

1 Cor. 6. 2. where it is ſaid *the ſaints ſhall judge the world*; it is meant that they ſhall attend our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and have a place of eminent dignity and honour at that great day, wherein he will judge all mankind. But *all ſhall appear before him to receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good, or bad* [u]. And the proceſs of judgment as it is repreſented by our Saviour, ſhews that it extends to all univerſally. His ſeparating the ſheep from the goats; his pronouncing a happy ſentence on the one ſort, and a ſentence of everlaſting deſtruction and miſery on the other [v]; ſhews that they are all the objects of his judicial authority at the great day of his appearance. Then,

2. *The world* is ſometimes taken generally, and not univerſally, not for every man of the world, but I ſay generally, for the generality of men, or the greateſt part of them. Thus frequently in the ſcripture the word is uſed; and to make it clear, let me produce three or four inſtances. John 14. 17. Chriſt was promiſing the ſpirit. Says he, *even the ſpirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knew him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you. The world*, that is the generality of men: ſome did receive the ſpirit: but they were only a few in compa-

[u] Cor. 5. 10. | [v] Mat. 25.

riſon

riſon of the reſt; therefore the generality are called the *world*. So *Rev.* 13. 3. *all the world wondred after the beaſt*; that is the generality of men, where the power of the beaſt was extended: the generality of men wondred after the beaſt, and worſhip'd him, ſubmitted to falſe worſhip, and devoted themſelves to the ſervice of the beaſt. *We know we are of God*, ſays the apoſtle, 1 John 5. 19. *and all the world lyes in wickedneſs* [w], or *in the wicked one* [x]: that is, the generality of mankind; for Chriſt's flock is but a *little flock*, in compariſon of the reſt; the whole world lyeth in wickedneſs. So our Lord ſays, that *he prayed not for the world, but for his diſciples* [y]. The whole prayer he then put up was for his people, for thoſe that ſhould believe in his name: but the generality of men are ſignified by *the world* in that text.

Sometimes by *the world* taken in a general ſenſe, is ſignified the Gentiles. As Rom. 11. 12. where the apoſtle is ſpeaking of the blindneſs, and hardneſs of the hearts of the Jews, he tells us, that *the cutting off the Jews ſhould be the enriching of the Gentiles, and the fall of them the riches of the world.* So that by *the world* there is meant the Gentiles in oppoſition to the Jews; and in 1 Tim. 3. 16. *Great is the myſtery of godlineſs,*

[w] Luke 12. 32.
[x] ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ.
[y] John 17. 9.

God

God was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. Preached to the Gentiles, and *believed on in the world,* i. e. believed on by the Gentiles, which was one great wonder, and a great part of the myſtery of godlineſs, as appears by other diſcourſes of the ſame apoſtle. But then, I ſay, this may be comprehended under the general ſenſe, in which *the world* is taken for the generality of men.

3. It is taken indefinitely for men, without determining the number. And there are various inſtances of this, as in John 3. 16, 17. *For God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. For God ſent not his ſon into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be ſaved.* In this place it ſeems evident, that it ought to be taken in an indefinite ſenſe; for it cannot be ſo properly ſaid of men in general, as men indefinitely. This is intimated by our Saviour, when he ſays, *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth:* it is intimated by the eſtabliſhment of this condition, that *whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* All the world are not ſaved; but *whoſoever believes in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, he ſhall be ſaved.* That is certain: *God ſent not his ſon into the*

world to condemn the world: this was not the work of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt when *manifeſt in the fleſh: but that the world through him might be ſaved*; that is, that men might be ſaved by him after this manner. Thus likewiſe in John 4. 42. he is called *the Saviour of the world.* And it may be particulary ſignified hereby, that his ſalvation was to extend to the Gentiles; which was a doctrine the Jews could no well digeſt. So in John 6. 33. it is ſaid *he gave life to the world*; that is to men. And that it is taken ſometimes thus indefinitely, is evident from Joel 2. 28. where there is the like term uſed. *I will pour out my ſpirit* (ſays God) *upon all fleſh, and your ſons and your daughters ſhall propheſy, your old men ſhall dream dreams, your young men ſhall ſee viſions,* &c. Now it is evident by what the apoſtle ſays in the beginning of the hiſtory of the Acts [z], of the application of that prophecy to that time, that it was in a ſpecial manner fulfilled when thoſe extraordinary gifts were given, and that it muſt have its fuller accompliſhment in the effuſion of God's grace among the people of the world, Jews and Gentiles. God did not pour out his ſpirit then, nor hath he ſince upon *all men* univerſally; never upon men in general; but he hath poured it out upon men indefinitely, whether young or old, Jew or

[z] Acts 2. 16, 17.

Gentile.

Gentile. He hath poured it out indifferently upon men without diſtinction of their being *Jews or Gentiles, Barbarians, Scythians, bond or free*, young or old [a]. So that *world*, may ſometimes in ſcripture be taken after an indefinite manner.

4. It is ſometimes taken (as I may term it) chronically, or with reſpect to the time. So various texts in ſcripture may be brought wherein this word is thus uſed. In 1 John 2. 2. it is ſaid of Chriſt *he was the propitiation for our ſins; and not for ours only but alſo for the ſins of the whole world.* Where in all appearance the apoſtle's meaning is, that he was not a propitiation only for the ſins of thoſe that were then alive, and that believed in his time, but, for the ſins of others in former generations of the world, and for the ſins alſo of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. That may be comprehended alſo in it, becauſe many of the Jews oppoſed the preaching of the goſpel among the Gentiles. Therefore the apoſtle was willing to inculcate this truth. He was *a propitiation for the ſins of the world*; for the ſins of Gentiles as well as of Jews. So Iſa. 53. 6. *The Lord hath laid on him*, ſays the prophet, *the iniquity of us all.* Wherein he may ſeem to comprehend thoſe under the Old Teſtament, as well as thoſe under the New: for they were ſaved by faith in the blood of Chriſt.

[a] Col. 3. 11.

He

He was *a lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world* [b], not only with reſpect to God's decree, but with a regard to the efficacy of his ſacrifice, for thoſe that believed in him, who ſhould be offered in the fulneſs of time.

5. Sometimes it is taken hyperbolically, concerning a few men in compariſon of the whole world; who yet may be called *the world* becauſe they are conſidered as a great number in a certain nation. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in John 18. 20. ſays, *he ever ſpoke openly to the world*; becauſe he ſpoke to a great number of the Jews. So *a world of iniquity* is ſaid to be *in the tongue* [c]; that is abundance of iniquity. Thus in common converſation, we ſay there were *a world* of people, when we mean only that there were a great number. And ſo it was ſaid by the Phariſees among themſelves, John 12. 19. relating to the prevalency of Chriſt's doctrine, *perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold the world is gone after him.* So the apoſtles are ſaid to ſubvert *the world*; *theſe are they which have turned the world upſide-down* [d]; that is they have engaged a great many proſelytes in ſeveral countries, tho thoſe who received the goſpel were far leſs in number than the reſt of mankind.

Now after this explication of the ſeveral ſenſes of the term *world* in ſcripture; we are

[b] Rev. 13. 8.
[c] James 3. 6.
[d] Acts 17. 6.

to conſider what is here meant by it in our text: *Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the ſin of the world.* This cannot be ſaid of *the world* univerſally conſidered. As it hath not regard to angels, ſo it is evident that the ſins of all mankind are not taken away. There are many that *dye in their ſins.* And our Lord tells the Jews that would be the conſequence with all thoſe who did not believe in him; they muſt dye. *Unleſs you believe that I am he, ye ſhall dye in your ſins* [e]. The baptiſt here ſpeaks of Chriſt under the character of a ſacrifice, one that had offered himſelf to that end and purpoſe, *to take away the ſins of the world.* If any ſay that it may reſpect all mankind with this condition, that they believe; that is certain, that *whoſoever believes ſhall be ſaved* [f]. Whoſoever believes in Chriſt, *his ſins ſhall be taken away.* But they themſelves muſt grant it cannot abſolutely have regard to all mankind. It cannot abſolutely have regard to all, but only to ſuch as believe: and theſe are but a ſmall part of mankind.

Again. It cannot be taken generally, any more than univerſally. For, as hath been already obſerved, the generality of men have not their ſins taken away. And if it be ſaid that the generality, if they believe, ſhall have their ſins taken away; the ſame anſwer may be returned as before. They

[e] John 8. 21, 24. | [f] John 3. 15.

may

may ſay the univerſality, all mankind that believe, ſhall have their ſins taken away; but then this reſtrains the term, becauſe there are very few that believe in compariſon of the whole world. *We know*, ſays the apoſtle John, *that we are of God, but the whole world lies in wickedneſs* [g]. This may, it is true, be taken hyperbolically, and ſo ſignify, that our Lord Jeſus takes away the ſins of many: for he does indeed conſtitute as it were a new *world*, eſpecially when we conſider thoſe that are redeemed by his blood in all ages of the world. Theſe make a great number: and our Lord *will come with ten thouſands of his ſaints* [h], a great number not only of angels but of ſaints. Thus it is ſaid prophetically, that *thouſands of thouſands miniſtred unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtood before him* [i]. There are in the various ages of the world a great number of thoſe that *are* truly *reconciled unto God, by the death* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt [k]. And all thoſe that *are redeemed unto God, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*, will be a very conſiderable number when they are collected together. Theſe will be the inhabitants of the new *world*, which our Lord Jeſus will conſtitute, after the heavens and the earth which now are, *are diſſolved* [l] according to his word.

[g] 1 John 5. 19.
[h] Jude 14.
[i] Dan. 7. 10. Rev. 5. 11.
[k] Rom. 5. 10.
[l] 2 Pet. 3. 12, 13.

But that which may comprehend theſe things, and therefore ſeems to be the cleareſt ſenſe, is, that the term ought to be taken indefinitely. *Behold the lamb of God that takes away the ſins of the world*; the ſins of men, without determining what number of men; takes away the ſins of men: not the ſins of angels, but the ſins of men; not the ſins of men of one nation only, but that takes away the ſins of the Gentiles as well as Jews: not the ſins of thoſe that live in one age only, or under one diſpenſation, but thoſe that live in another, under the law, or under the goſpel. *This is he that takes away the ſins of men*, without determining whether the greater or whether the leſſer number; for there are other texts that do ſufficiently determine that; and ſhew us what is neceſſary to ſalvation, and after what manner our Lord takes away the ſins of men. So that I do not ſee that from this text the number, whether greater or leſſer, of thoſe whoſe ſins are taken away, can be argued: but that the deſign of this character is to ſhew that our Lord Jeſus, is the one only Mediator, the great interceſſor, the great ſacrifice, who was capable only of taking away the ſin of man, without determining the number of thoſe whoſe ſins ſhould be taken away eventually. This ſenſe ſeems to be very large, and comprehenſive of ſome of the things that have been already ſpoken; and I think may well be counted unexceptionable,

unexceptionable, becauſe it is ſo common in the holy ſcripture, to ſpeak after this indefinite manner; as appears by the texts that have been already cited.

II. We are to enquire what is to be underſtood by *the ſin of the world.* Some think it is a particular kind of ſin, of which the whole world is guilty; namely, original ſin: becauſe, ſay they, no other ſin can be ſo properly called *the ſin of the world*, as original ſin. And hence they imagine that our Lord Jeſus, tho he hath not taken away all the ſins of mankind, yet hath taken away the ſin of the whole world; that is, the original ſin; and thus they endeavour to extend the term *world* to ſignify the world univerſally. But I think this is not the ſenſe of this text, becauſe there is no other ſcripture that I know off, that does ſupport ſuch a ſenſe as this, that our Lord Jeſus hath taken away original ſin from *the world.* For, if ſo; then when men dye in their ſins, as the ſcripture declares they do, the greateſt part of them, it may be ſaid then, that they dye without original ſin upon them. Beſides, if our Lord takes away original ſin, it muſt be either that he takes away the corruption of our nature, in regard of the guilt, or in regard of the filth and impurity, the power of ſin. If he takes away original ſin, in regard of the guilt of it; then this is inconſiſtent with

what the ſcripture every where ſpeaks, concerning Chriſt's taking away ſin, which is a removal not only of the guilt, but of the filth of ſin, the power of ſin. The power of ſin is ſubdued, as well as the guilt of it is taken away; the one indeed is done perfectly, and the other carried on gradually; but however, there is his operation upon both accounts. And therefore, if original ſin, as to the guilt of it were taken away from all mankind; then the power of it would be ſubdued, at leaſt in ſome good degree in all mankind. On the contrary, we find that the wicked are condemned, as being under the guilt of all their ſins, dying in their ſins of whatſoever kind, if they believe not in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore there is no appearance of one part of their ſin being taken away, and the other part of it remaining upon them; for then Chriſt would be to them a partial Saviour; ſave them from one part of their ſin, the guilt of it, and puniſh them, and let them ſink under the other for ever: and I think the ſcripture no where ſpeaks like this. If it be argued, that original ſin muſt be hereby meant, becauſe it is not ſaid, that he takes away the *ſins* of the world, but *the ſin* of the world, and ſin ſems to determine it to a particular ſin; there are other texts wherein all kinds of ſin are comprehended under this term: and therefore it may be as well ſo here. I need only to refer you to the

6th of the Romans, where the apoſtle ſpeaks of *the wages of ſin being death*[n], all ſin of whatſoever kind; and ſo we are ſaid *to dye to ſin*, and *to riſe in newneſs of life*[o]. And that *ſin ſhall not have dominion over us*[p]. Where ſin, in the ſingular number, means all kind of ſin together.

Therefore *the ſin of the world*, may be very well interpreted of all the ſins that men are guilty of, as rendering them obnoxious to the curſe of God's law; all the tranſgreſſions and violations of it. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt came *to take away ſin* after this manner. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*[q], ſays the prophet Iſaiah. That is, all kind of iniquity of which we have been guilty. And the prophet Daniel foretels, that he ſhould *finiſh tranſgreſſion, make an end of ſin, and make reconciliation for iniquity*[r]. Sin therefore comprehends all ſin. So that *the ſin of the world* ſignifies all the tranſgreſſions that men commit in the world. Whatſoever iniquities are commited, our Lord Jeſus as *the lamb of God* came *to take away by the ſacrifice of himſelf*[s]. *The ſin of the world* is therefore the ſins of men indefinitely.

III. What is it *to take away the ſin of the world?* What is the ſenſe of this in the place under our notice? The word that is

[n] Rom. 6. 23.
[o] *ver.* 2, 10, 11.
[p] *ver.* 14.
[q] Iſa. 53. 6.
[r] Dan. 9. 24.
[s] Heb. 9. 26.

uſed in the original [s], is taken ſeveral ways in the New Teſtament: and there is a word in the Old Teſtament in the Hebrew, that ſeems to be of the ſame ſignificancy and extent, and is uſed variouſly in like manner. Here I ſhall ſhew that it ſignifies and may import,

1. A ſubſtitution of one for another, ſo as to *bear* that which belongs to another.
2. The expiation of guilt, or making ſatisfaction to the divine juſtice.
3. The pardon of ſin. And,
4. The mortification or ſubduing of ſin. All theſe may well be comprehended in the text.

1. As for the ſubſtitution of one for another. It is ſaid, as we intimated before, *the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all* [t]; transfered our guilt upon him. So the word is taken, *Mat.* 11. 29. [u] for taking up; a voluntary taking up, of Chriſt's yoke, *take my yoke upon you.* Take it up voluntarily. If we interpret this actively of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; why it was a voluntary taking upon himſelf to anſwer for our guilt, a taking upon him a debt that we had contracted, in order to ſatisfy divine juſtice: for in order to make ſatisfaction there muſt be a ſubſtitution; and therefore, our Lord ſuffered

[s] ὁ αἴρων.
[t] Iſa. 53. 6.
[u] ἄρατε τὸν ζυγόν μου—

not

not only for our benefit, but in our place. And in ſeveral other places the word ſignifies a man's taking ſomething as a burden upon himſelf. So our Lord Jeſus Chriſt may be ſaid to take up our ſins, to take the burden of them upon himſelf; *he was made ſin for us who knew no ſin; that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him* [v].

2. In like manner it may ſignify expiation and ſatisfaction. So 1 Pet. 2. 24. *who his own ſelf bore our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to ſin ſhould live unto righteouſneſs, by whoſe ſtripes ye were healed.* Here is not only a ſubſtitution, his ſtanding in our ſtead, and bearing our guilt upon him; but his making expiation, his making ſatisfaction, and bearing our ſins upon the croſs, and dying, ſhedding his precious blood to make reconciliation. His bearing, or taking our ſins upon him, ſhews that he put himſelf in our place: his bearing the puniſhment that was due to our ſins, ſhews that he made ſatisfaction for them, and hereby brought in an *everlaſting righteouſneſs* [w].

3. It ſignifies pardon. This is comprehended or implyed in the other: for if he makes ſatisfaction for our ſins; then, as there was room for God to pardon without derogation from his juſtice, ſo our Lord hath power to forgive ſins, it being a part of his

[v] 2 Cor. 5. 21. | [w] Dan. 9. 24.

kingly office, part of his exaltation. *Becauſe he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs; therefore hath God highly exalted him* [x]. He ſhewed ſomething of this royal power and authority while upon earth; in the caſe of the paralytick, Mark 2. 10, 11. *That you may know,* ſays he, *that the ſon of man hath power on earth to forgive ſins; I ſay unto thee, ariſe, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine houſe.* And, *thy ſins are forgiven thee*; ſays he to the poor woman in Luke 7. 48. But our Lord Jeſus is now exalted in a ſpecial manner to diſpenſe this power, of forgiving of ſins. He is *exalted as a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveneſs of ſins* [y], to give remiſſion of ſins himſelf. So he takes away our ſins, he removes them from us, he takes them upon himſelf, and bears them by way of ſubſtitution and ſatisfaction: and he takes them away from us by pardoning and forgiving them; for ſo the word frequently ſignifies; a taking away our ſins, by blotting out tranſgreſſions; covering our iniquities, by granting us a remiſſion of them.

4. It may ſignify the mortification of ſin too. I might ſhew you that the word in the Hebrew which ſignifies *bearing of ſin*, or *taking it away*, and imports pardon: ſo it likewiſe ſignifies ſubduing; as [z] Iſa. 1,

[x] Phil. 2. 8, 9.
[y] Acts 5. 31.
[z] ואסירה.

25. So the Greek word, 1 John 3. 5. *And ye know that he was manifeſted to take away our ſins.* This is the ſame in the original [a] with that word in our text. And it will plainly appear, that it is here uſed to ſignify the ſubduing the power of ſin, if you compare it with what goes before in the 4th verſe and what follows. *Whoſoever commiteth ſin, tranſgreſſeth alſo the law, for ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the law. Whoſoever abideth in him ſinneth not; whoſoever ſinneth hath not ſeen him neither known him. And ye know that he was manifeſted to take away our ſins.* Here the apoſtle preſſes it as an argument for ſanctification, for living holily: for this was one end of Chriſt's being manifeſted; *to take away our ſins*, i. e. the power of them. I think it is paſt reaſonable contradiction, that the phraſe in this place ſignifies the ſubduing of ſin: and it is the ſame word with that in our text. And to the like purpoſe we read of our redemption by Chriſt: 1 Pet. 1. 18, &c. *Foraſmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver, and gold, from your vain converſation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot.* We are redeemed not only from the guilt of ſin, but from our vain converſation, by the offering of Chriſt

[a] ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἄρῃ.

the

the lamb of God: who came *to take away the ſin of the world*, in this reſpect; to redeem us from the power of ſin, as well as from the guilt of ſin, to break and looſe the bands wherewith we were bound; not only that we might eſcape the penalty we have deſerved, but might be delivered from the ſlavery to which we were ſubjected.

Thus have I endeavoured to clear up the ſenſe of theſe words: which was my principal intention. So that it appears this was the great deſign of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: he came to ſubſtitute himſelf for us, that he might be in a condition to make expiation for our guilt: he came actually to do this; in order to give pardon or remiſſion of ſin, to take away the guilt of our ſins from us: and he came to take away the power of ſin, that that might be ſubdued. Thus *the lamb of God takes away the ſin of the world.* And this confirms what had been ſaid before concerning the ſins of the world; our Lord Jeſus takes away the ſins of the world, by making men holy, as well as taking away their guilt. Thoſe that would underſtand *the world* in this place univerſally, would not preſume to ſay, that our Lord took away the power of the ſin of the world univerſally; for that is an after work. It ſeems therefore reaſonable that we ſhould not limit the ſenſe: but let the word be as extenſive as in other places, and ſo underſtand it of men indefinitely. And indeed the ſins

of

of all thoſe ſhall be purged away, both the guilt and the filth done away, from all thoſe that lay hold on our Lord Jeſus Chriſt by faith. If they will interpret it after this manner, and determine the ſenſe by that condition, it is the ſame that is ſaid in other texts of ſcripture. But then this will ſo diſpoſe the matter that it will be no more than what we ſay; if they interpret it, I ſay, under this condition of believing. For it is certain from the event, that it is not either the univerſality or generality of the world that do believe: they are but a few in compariſon; and therefore the moſt extenſive ſenſe that can fairly be given, is to interpret *the world* as ſignifying men indefinitely, of whatſoever degree, of whatſoever nation, or quality; of whatſoever rank of ſinners againſt the law of God. The lamb of God is propoſed to them as the great ſacrifice, ſubſtituted to make atonement, to offer pardon; and is able to ſubdue all their iniquity.

I might here inſiſt more particularly upon the ſeveral parts of the work of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in taking away ſin. I might ſhew you, that in regard of the ſubſtitution, all things are well concerted there. For it is conſiſtent with the juſtice of God, that one ſhould be ſubſtituted in the place of another, upon certain conditions; if it be voluntary; if there is no injuſtice offered to him, that ſuffers the penalty due to another;

another; if in other reſpects he is proper and fit for that purpoſe. It is true, it may be injuſtice if a man have not a right to diſpoſe of himſelf, becauſe others have a greater right to him. But our Lord had power and authority to diſpoſe of himſelf, becauſe he was more than a man, for he was *God manifeſt in the fleſh*[b]: therefore he could diſpoſe of his humane nature as he pleaſed, and make himſelf an offering for ſin. Another condition muſt be, that this perſon muſt honour the law of God, as much as if the perſons guilty had ſuffered. And he did this more, becauſe he was a perſon of infinite dignity; the honour therefore which he paid to the law of God, bears a proportion to the grandeur of his perſon. Another conſiderable condition ſeems to be this, to render a ſubſtitution juſt and fit; if hereby ſin might be diſcouraged as much or more, and holineſs as much or more encouraged, by the ſufferings of the ſubſtitution, as if the guilty perſon had ſuffered. Now ſin is more diſcouraged, and holineſs more encouraged by Chriſt's undertaking for us, than if we had ſuffered for our own ſins. For if we had ſuffered for our own ſins, there would not have been any ſuch thing as holineſs in the world, there would not have been any motive to engage us to be holy; for it is the love of God, his

[b] 1 Tim. 3. 16.

grace,

grace, that melts us effectually. We could not have been reformed without grace, nor could we have grace without Chriſt had merited it by his ſufferings: therefore his ſufferings lay a foundation for the eſtabliſhment of holineſs, and diſcourage all manner of ſin. For beſides the ordinary motives that are againſt it, there are powerful ones drawn from the ſufferings of Chriſt, which moſt ſtrongly fortify the ſoul againſt the power of temptations.

I might diſcourſe to you in like manner concerning ſatisfaction, and ſhew you of how great extent the ſacrifice of our Lord was, in regard of its eminent dignity, both from the dignity of his perſon, and the extraordinary greatneſs of his ſufferings, and from the excellent temper and frame of his mind, when under them. I might prove from the conſequences likewiſe, of our Saviour's death, that the ſatisfaction was plenary, God having declared himſelf well pleaſed, not only in the life of Chriſt, and by his raiſing him from the dead, whereby he declared his ſacrifice was available: but alſo in that he hath received him up to the throne of glory, *there ever to live to make interceſſion for us* [c]. As he *aſcended up on high, ſo he gave gifts to men* [d]. By the extraordinary effuſion of the ſpirit in conſequence of his exaltation, we have a wonderful proof of

[c] Heb. 7. 25. [d] Eph. 4. 8.

the

the availableneſs of his ſatisfaction.

I might alſo enlarge upon the pardon which our Lord not only procures, but gives. He procured it as a prieſt; in offering ſatisfaction, he merited the remiſſion of ſins. But beſides this, he gives it as a prince. And I might ſhew you that this pardon contains in it not only an exemption from puniſhment, but likewiſe a reſtoring us to God's favour; and ſo high favour is that which our Lord hath merited, as to comprehend in it all the privileges both of the ſtate of grace, and that of glory.

I might moreover ſhew you, that it is no leſs a part of our Lord's undertaking, to take away ſin from us, in ſanctifying our natures, than to take away our puniſhment by ſubſtituting himſelf in our ſtead: ſo that this indeed ſhews the perfection of his undertaking, the perfection of his work; for this will advance us to the ſtate of glory, where there will be perfect ſanctity. He perfectly juſtifies now by his righteouſneſs; but he perfectly ſanctifies by his grace. But the time obliges me to draw to a concluſion; therefore I ſhall make but a reflection or two upon what I have ſaid. And,

1. If our Lord Jeſus came to offer himſelf to dye as *a lamb*, a ſacrifice *without blemiſh, and without ſpot* [e], that he might

[e] 1 Pet. 1. 19.

take

take away the ſin of the world: as this intimates to us the wonderful efficacy of Chriſt's ſacrifice, and its availableneſs to the end and purpoſe propoſed; ſo it ſhews the riches of his grace, and love to us, as well as the love of the father. What was this world in compariſon of him? worſe than nothing; *leſs than nothing and vanity* [f]. There was nothing to move him to ſhew mercy; but much to provoke him to execute his wrath and judgment upon men. *All men had ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God: there was none that did good, no not one* [g]. What infinite love muſt that be, that can find arguments in itſelf, when none were to be found from the world, in favour of the objects on whom this love was ſet, and for whom this proviſion was made? it was no leſs than infinite love that ſhould cauſe the father to ſend the ſon, and engage the ſon to put himſelf in our ſtead, and offer himſelf a ſacrifice for us, when there was nothing taking and endearing, but all hateful and provoking on our ſide. As this ſhews the wonderful love of God, ſo the efficacy of this ſacrifice. Our Lord came to offer up himſelf, to take away the ſin of the world: whatſoever ſin Jew or Gentile, bond or free had been guilty of; whatſoever violation of God's law, whatſoever aggravations attended theſe iniquities, *the blood of Jeſus*

[f] Iſa. 40. 17. | [g] Rom. 3. 12, 23.

Chriſt his ſon, cleanſes us from all ſin. Tho *innumerable evils have compaſſed us about, tho our iniquities have taken hold upon us, ſo that we are not able to look up, tho they are more than the hairs of our head*; [h] *tho our ſins be as ſcarlet and crimſon* [i]; there is the ſame efficacy in the blood of our Redeemer; *the blood of Jeſus cleanſes from all ſin* [k]. There is but one ſin that cannot be forgiven; and that is not ſo properly a ſin againſt the law of God, ſtrictly ſpeaking, as againſt the manifeſtation of his grace and ſpirit: and the reaſon why thoſe cannot be ſaved who are guilty of that ſin, is not becauſe there is not an infinite value in the blood of Chriſt to ſave, but becauſe it is inconſiſtent with the divine perfections in the order of juſtice to ſave men without repentance: and it is impoſſible from the nature of the ſin, that they ſhould be brought to repentance who are guilty of it, becauſe theſe harden themſelves againſt the cleareſt light, and the greateſt methods of grace and mercy. What an encouragment then is here given to ſinners? and have not we who are miniſters of the word of ſalvation, reaſon to complain of men that *they will not believe our report* [l], when it is ſo well founded, and ſo well furniſhed with motives, in regard to the great love of God to ſinners, and the intereſt

[h] Pſal. 40. 12.
[i] Iſa. 1. 18.
[k] 1 John 1. 7.
[l] Iſa. 53. 1.

that

that every man hath to ſeek for the ſalvation of his ſoul? Have not your conſciences been troubled ſometimes under the ſenſe of ſin? Have you not ſometimes conſidered what an odious thing it is? Have you never been affected with a ſenſe of the corruption of your own nature, and the ſins of your lives? Have you never looked into your danger? Have you never conſidered what *a fearful thing* it is *to fall into the hands of the living God?* Have you not heard of *the lake that burns with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death*[m], *of the worm that dies not, and of the fire that can never be quenched*[n]? Do you not know that *God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the ſecrets of all hearts*[o]? do not you know that thoſe who are not intereſted in Chriſt, and his ſufferings, cannot eſcape this? do not you know you can never make reparation to the divine majeſty for your tranſgreſſions, by all that you can do or ſuffer? do not you know that *there is no name under heaven whereby men can be ſaved, but the name of Jeſus*[p]? why then have you not ſecured this great and important point? *Why will you not come unto Chriſt that you may have life?* Our Saviour complains of the Jews in his day, John 5. 40. *Ye will not come to me that you might have life.* We, as John the baptiſt, ſay unto you,

[m] Mark 9. 44.
[n] Rev. 20. 14.
[o] Acts 17. 31. Rom. 2. 16.
[p] Acts 4. 12.

behold the lamb of God that takes away the ſin of the world; who believes this; or ſhews they do believe it by imbracing Jeſus Chriſt crucified? who is willing to be waſhed in his blood, to be clothed with his righteouſneſs, to be conformed to his image, to ſubmit to his government, and put themſelves under his conduct for ſalvation? You are in the utmoſt danger if you apply not yourſelves to this ſacrifice. And our Lord will caſt out none that come unto him. *Whoſoever comes to me* (ſays Chriſt) *I will in no wiſe caſt out* [q]; whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free. Here is an indefinite repreſentation of our Lord Jeſus, as the ſacrifice for the ſins of men: therefore what ſhould hinder you from ſeeking peace and reconciliation with God, in the new and living way that he hath conſecrated?

II. This ſhould engage us all if we have partaken of Chriſt Jeſus, and have been waſhed in his blood, to conſider what was the end of his ſufferings, *to take away the ſin of the world*, the power as well as the guilt of ſin. Let us apply ourſelves to the lamb of God for both; for his grace is ſufficient for us. *If any man ſin, we have an advocate with the father* [r]. And *his blood cleanſes us from all ſin* [s]. Let us apply

[q] John 6. 37.
[r] 1 John 2. 1.
[s] 1 John 1. 7.

ourſelves

ourſelves to *this fountain, that is opened for ſin and for uncleanneſs* [s]. *This is he that came by water and by blood* [t]; to ſanctify and cleanſe us that way, as well as to make an attonement for our ſins by his blood. The water and blood that iſſued from his ſide, ſignified that he came both to juſtify, and to ſanctify. Therefore, as in the miniſtry of the goſpel we are directed to Jeſus Chriſt, as to *the lamb of God that takes away the ſin of the world*; and as he ſays, *when I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me* [v]; ſo let us look up to him, that we may have life, and that our faces may not be aſhamed at the great day of his appearance.

[s] Zech. 13. 1.
[t] 1 John 5. 6.
[v] John 12. 32.

SERMON XII.

Death to good men a desireable releaſe.

Occaſion'd by the death of Mr. —— *HILL.*

Preach'd at

PINNERS-HALL, Aug. 17. 1706.

JOB 3. 17.

There the wicked ceaſe from troubling; and there the weary be at reſt.

THE book of *Job* ſeems to have been written, to juſtify the providence of God, in ſometimes permitting the beſt of men to be exerciſed with the greateſt afflictions: a conſideration which has ſtumbled many wiſe and good men. The pſalmiſt

declares, that he was ready to think, *he had waſhed his hands in innocency, and cleanſed his heart in vain; when he ſaw the proſperous condition of the wicked, and himſelf* was *chaſtned every morning* [s]. But this matter is well cleared up in this book, to every one that will *conſider the patience of Job, and the end of the Lord* [t]; as the apoſtle James remarks. It will appear indeed, that this perſon, who was famed for piety above any one in the earth, at leaſt above any one in that part of the world; ſo that God himſelf ſeems to boaſt of him, and challenge Satan concerning him, *haſt thou conſidered my ſervant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and eſcheweth evil* [v]? it will appear I ſay, that this perſon, holy and excellent as he was, was yet afflicted after an uncommon manner. But then it will alſo appear, upon the iſſue of the providence that attended him, that there was enough in the manner of his behaviour, and in the favourable return of good things to him at laſt, to convince his friends that it was very poſſible, for a man to be very holy, and yet be expoſed to great miſery and trouble for a while; and to convince him that God was *righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works* towards him [u]; who chaſtened him after this ter-

[s] Pſal. 73. 13, 14.
[t] James 4. 11.
[v] Job 1. 8.
[u] Pſal. 145. 17.

rible manner, to exercise his faith and patience, to make him more humble, and to let him see the divine sovereignty over him, and the entire dependence in which his mind ought to be on the providence of God, who turned all his sorrow into joy, and his adverse state into a condition of prosperity.

Almost the whole of this book is written in a poetical stile. Indeed the beginning of it, which is an historical relation of the prosperity of Job, and of the sufferings that befel him; and the end of it, which shews the return of his prosperity afterwards, is written in prose. But the speeches that are made by Job, and by his friends, and represented as made by God himself, at the close of the book, are all in poetry. In the first chapter of this book, an account is given of Job's great piety, and of his prosperous condition; and then an account of the dreadful calamities that befel him; his children all destroy'd by the fall of a house, his cattel taken from him, and his servants slain by the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans*, or destroy'd by fire from heaven. In the second chapter, we have an account that he was himself tormented with a loathsome, and painful disease, his body being smitten all over with boils: and that his wife, who should have been his comforter, tempted him under his great afflictions, *to curse God and die* [w],

[w] Job 2. 9.

when

when ſhe ſaw ſuch extraordinary calamities befall him. Under all which miſery, Job behaved himſelf well, as is teſtified of him in the 10th verſe. *He ſaid unto her, thou ſpeakeſt as one of the fooliſh women ſpeaketh; what, ſhall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil? in all this Job ſinned not with his lips.* The latter end of the chapter informs us, that Job's friends came to viſit him on this melancholy occaſion: and that when they beheld ſo doleful a ſpectacle, *they lift up their voices and wept, and each one rent his mantle,* as you ſee in the 12th verſe, *and ſprinkled duſt on their heads towards heaven; ſo they ſat down with him upon the ground, ſeven days and ſeven nights, and none ſpake a word unto him, for they ſaw that his grief was very great* [x]. This long and mournful ſilence was a very ſolemn manner of condolance indeed. At length Job begins to vent himſelf, and in the moſt moving terms to expreſs his ſorrow; in the beginning of this chapter, from whence I have taken my text. *After this Job opened his mouth, and curſed his day. And Job ſpake and ſaid, let the day periſh wherein I was born, and the night in which it was ſaid, there is a man-child conceived. Let that day be darkneſs, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light ſhine upon it, &c.* Thus

[x] *ver.* 13.

he delivers himſelf to the ſame purpoſe in divers following verſes.

Here indeed occurs a difficulty: and many learned men have been at a loſs, what to think concerning this paſſage, that Job ſhould curſe the day of his birth. As likewiſe the ſame difficulty has occurr'd concerning the prophet Jeremiah, in chap. 20. *ver.* 14. *Curſed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me, be bleſſed. Curſed be the man who brought tidings to my father, ſaying, a man-child is born unto thee, making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not, &c.*

Some have thought that theſe expreſſions might be juſtified; and others, that they are worthy of blame. 'Tis more difficult indeed to juſtify what is ſaid by the prophet Jeremiah, than what is ſaid by Job. They both curſed the day of their birth: but Jeremiah curſed the man that brought the tidings that himſelf was born, and would have ſuch a one overthrown and made like Sodom and Gomorrah. It ſeems indeed, to be an extraordinary tranſport of paſſion, that render'd him guilty of a great ſin: for we are commanded not to curſe but to bleſs; *bleſs and curſe not* [y]. And 'tis a very unreaſonable thing, for any perſon to wiſh or pray for any miſery and calamity on others, eſpecially

[y] Rom. 12. 14.

on

on thoſe that are innocent, and deſerve no ſuch imprecation; as we muſt eaſily imagine to be the caſe of the perſon that brought news to *Jeremiah's* father, of the time of his birth. Some indeed endeavour to ſalve this matter, by ſaying, that after he had repreſented the occaſion he had of thankſgiving, for God's delivering him out of the dungeon, he ſignified what he was tempted to do, while his calamities were upon him. But this doth not appear from the context: and the words moſt plainly give us a direct account, that he curſed the man that brought tidings of his birth to his father. It ought, I think, therefore to be underſtood as Jeremiah's great fault, and to be reckon'd among thoſe ſins of good men, which are recorded in ſcripture as warnings to us, that we might avoid being guilty of the ſame.

As for Job, who only curſes the day of his birth, I think that may be repreſented very fairly not to be criminal. Curſing, indeed, is ſpoken of variouſly in the holy ſcripture. Sometimes it ſignifies the infliction of a puniſhment: ſo God is ſaid to curſe men, when he inflicts puniſhments upon them, becauſe of their ſins. *Curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree* [z], as ſaith the law. Sometimes it ſignifies the denunciation of a ſentence in order to puniſhment: ſo God in his law pronounces curſes upon thoſe

[z] Gal. 3. 13.

that

that ſhould be guilty of various ſins, declaring that ſuch curſes were juſtly to be inflicted on them, and ſhould overtake them. Sometimes it is a prophetical prediction: and thus the prophets pray after ſuch a manner, for judgments to befal the wicked. But this does not juſtify others, in praying for judgments to befal any particular perſons, unleſs they could prove they had the ſpirit of prophecy, and ſo could predict the ruin of perſons as the prophets did. 'Tis true, in general, we may pray for the accompliſhment of the holy ſcripture, and for the deſtruction of the enemies of God, and for the welfare of communities that are engaged in a juſt war, and for the defeat of other communities, whoſe cauſe is unjuſt, and who are bringing miſeries upon mankind. But then curſing ſometimes may ſignify, as 'tis apply'd to *things*, and not to *perſons*, ſomething different from thoſe ideas we have been expreſſing: for ſometimes *things* are curſed; and ſo the *ground* is ſaid to be *curſed for the ſake of man*[a]. *Things* that are uncapable of underſtanding, or of moral actions, cannot be ſo properly curſed; but whatever curſe there was upon the ground, this was upon the account of man's ſin, and to render his condition more troubleſome and uneaſy. The degeneracy of the creation, there being a degeneracy, in all probability,

[a] Gen. 3. 17.

in all creatures, that were ſubordinate to man, is an expreſſion of God's wrath and curſe upon man himſelf. And when a time is ſaid to be curs'd, as Job curſes the time of his birth, it cannot be ſuppoſed that he ſtrictly wiſh'd that darkneſs ſhould be upon that time, and that it ſhould not have thoſe advantages that other days had; that he really deſired to have the very day itſelf on which he was born thus mark'd with the diſpleaſure of heaven, which was impoſſible, it being paſt and gone. Or indeed that he by this expreſſion ſtrictly deſired, the ſame day in its annual revolution to be thus treated. No; it ſhould rather I think be taken, only as an elegant, poetical expreſſion, and as much as to ſay, "If ſuch a thing could be, "I could wiſh that day were clouded with "darkneſs, and that there might be ſome "extraordinary mark placed upon it, by "the providence of God, becauſe it produced "a man that is become ſo miſerable as I am "at preſent." And thus ſeeing it imports no evil deſire to any perſon, but by a proſopopœia, is a figurative repreſentation of his great ſorrow; we ought to take it, I think, in this poetical view and not ſtrictly in the letter.

Now while he is declaring this his great ſorrow after this manner, and complaining that ever he was born alive into the world, he proceeds to lament that he did not die, however, as ſoon as he was born; he ſays,

in

in *ver.* 11, 12, 13. *why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghoſt, when I came out of the belly? why did the knees prevent me? or why the breaſts that I ſhould ſuck? for now ſhould I have lien ſtill, and been quiet, I ſhould have ſlept: then had I been at reſt.* As much as to ſay, " why " have I lived to theſe years, to undergo " ſuch a variety of miſeries? why was I " not rather cut off as ſoon as I enter'd into " the world? then I ſhould have never ſeen " ſuch a diſmal day as this. An early death " had prevented theſe uncommon calamities; " and I ſhould now have been in a ſtate of " quiet and repoſe." And then as envying thoſe that were dead, (ſtill ſpeaking after this poetical manner) he repreſents to himſelf in what a condition they were, and how much more happy than himſelf, *ver.* 14, 15. *with kings and counſellours of the earth, which built deſolate places for themſelves.* They prepared tombs for themſelves before they dy'd; *with princes that had gold, who filled their houſes with ſilver.* Where he ſeems to refer to the cuſtom of ſome princes, who when they were interr'd had great treaſures buried with them: and in the eaſtern parts of the world this cuſtom is uſed to this day. He goes on farther, in the words of our text and the two following verſes, to repreſent the ſame ſtate of the dead: *There the wicked* (that is in the grave) *ceaſe from troubling, and there the weary be at reſt, &c.* There lie, ſays

ſays he, " the great men of the world; and " the poor and contemptible are there; " the prince, and counſellour, and the " priſoners and captives: there the ſervant " is free from his maſter; the ſmall and " great are there, in the like ſtate of re- " poſe." *Wherefore is light given to him that is in miſery, and life to the bitter in ſoul* [b]? " Why is my life continued, when I have " ſo much trouble that renders death more " eligible to me?" *who long for death but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treaſures* [c], *&c.* In this manner he expreſſes his paſſionate deſire to die.

Thus you ſee theſe words are a part of *Job's* deſcription of the quiet and repoſe that there is in the ſtate of the dead. And he uſes theſe kind of expreſſions to ſignify, how much himſelf deſired to die, who had endured ſo much ſorrow and miſery. *There the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and there the weary be at reſt.* As he mourns that ever he was born, and wiſhes he had died as ſoon as he came into the world; ſo he complains that he ſtill lived under thoſe great burthens and afflictions that at preſent attended him.

There: that is, in the grave: for tho the grave is not expreſs'd, he had been ſpeaking of the ſtate of the dead, and therefore you may be ſure his thoughts were fix'd upon that. *There*; that is, in that ſtate

[b] *ver.* 20. [c] *ver.* 21.

and

and condition, *the wicked ceaſe from troubling*. The word that is here render'd *wicked* [d], ſome render, *thoſe who are in continual motion and agitation*; the men that are diſturbed, they ceaſe from trouble. But however, ſeeing the word is generally tranſlated *wicked* in the holy ſcripture, it ſeems moſt agreable to take it ſo here: *the wicked ceaſe from troubling, the voice of the oppreſſor is no more heard* [e]. Some indeed think that the ſenſe of *Job* is, *there the wicked ceaſe from being troubled* themſelves, with the remorſe of conſcience, or from being agitated by their violent paſſions and ſins; and ſo, that Job repreſents that 'tis better, even for the wicked themſelves, to be in the ſtate of the dead, than alive, where they are agitated with violent paſſions, and where they commit ſins, which fill them with remorſe and trouble of mind. But this ſenſe ſeems to be too much ſtrained: for tho 'tis true, that the wicked ceaſe from ſinning in their bodies, when their bodies are in the grave; it does not follow, that their ſouls ceaſe from ſinning, when they are in a ſtate of ſeparation from their bodies. But as they muſt then be in a condition of deſpair and miſery, in a ſtate where there is no repentance, to be ſure they muſt needs perſiſt in a ſtate of ſin; and therefore 'tis better much, for them to be alive, than to be in the ſtate

[d] רשעים [e] *ver.* 18.

of

of the dead: for as they are in a ſtate of ſin there, ſo to be ſure they are in a ſtate of miſery and deſpair; and while they are ſo, their averſion to God is ſtill greater. And then as for remorſe and trouble of conſcience; as the wicked have it here, the torment of their minds muſt certainly be much more in the other world, the agitation of their ſpirits muſt be much more terrible, than while they only had ſome apprehenſion of theſe things, and while theſe apprehenſions were not ſtrong enough to retain them from committing ſin, for the commiſſion of which theſe miſeries were threatned.

Some interpret theſe words after this manner: *there the wicked*, that is, ſuch as were once wicked ſinners, but have true repentance, there they *ceaſe from trouble*, from agitation or diſturbance of mind, ceaſe from their evil paſſions, or from remorſe of conſcience, and are in a ſtate of eaſe and repoſe. But there ſeems no colour at all for this ſenſe in the text: for here the wicked are ſpoken of abſolutely, without the leaſt intimation of their repentance; tho indeed there is the authority of the Chaldee paraphraſe for this interpretation.

But I think the moſt genuine interpretation is with reference to the righteous. *There the wicked ceaſe from troubling*: that is, there no wicked man can trouble the righteous, none can trouble the pious man there: and *thoſe that are weary* with affliction

affliction and perſecution, *are at reſt.* And this concurs very well with what follows; *there the priſoners reſt together, they hear not the voice of the oppreſſor* [f]. This, therefore, as being moſt agreeable with the context, I chuſe as the proper ſenſe of the text. And this is ſuitable to the character of Job, and the circumſtances of his ſufferings too. For, can it be imagined, while righteous Job is wiſhing to be dead, it ſhould come into his mind that in that ſtate the wicked were at eaſe? No: he well knew it was the beginning of their ſorrows: therefore reaſon, as well as the context and the character of Job, ſhews that the words muſt be thus interpreted. To this we may add the preſent circumſtances of the good man's ſufferings. He had been very injuriouſly dealt with: troops of robbers came upon him, and took away his cattel: he might therefore well ſay, *there the weary ceaſe from troubling.* His ſleep was taken from him by the anguiſh of his mind, and by the pains of his diſtemper'd body: he might therefore well cry out, *there the weary are at reſt.* It is a ſtate of repoſe for the body; and 'tis a ſtate of reſt and joy and ſatisfaction for the ſoul. But he ſeems to ſpeak chiefly of the body here. Having given you this explication of the text, it will furniſh us with a fair occaſion,

[f] *ver.* 18.

I. To

I. To treat of the ſtate of good men in this world; and ſhew, that they are ſometimes expoſed to great affliction, to perſecution, to much trouble and ſorrow.

II. To ſhew, that death will releaſe them from all thoſe troubles and miſeries which do attend them in this world. And,

III. To obſerve that a reflection on this, has made the proſpect of death not only tolerable to good men, but deſireable.

I will not undertake to ſay that Job's paſſionate deſire of death was not too earneſt: but, however, good men may deſire death on ſome occaſions, and with ſome reſtriction, as we ſhall have occaſion to ſhew; and as the reaſon of the thing may juſtify it on ſome accounts, ſo there are inſtances in the ſcripture of this kind. On theſe three things, I ſay, the words that have been read to you, lead us to diſcourſe.

I. We are to take notice, that good men in this world, are ſometimes expoſed to great trials and afflictions, great ſorrows and calamities. It was on this account, that Job deſired to paſs out of this world into another; that he might be free from thoſe great troubles with which he was exerciſed. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous* [g]; and nothing is more frequent in ſcripture,

[g] Pſal. 34. 19.

than the complaints of ſuch good men on this account. Thoſe who have been very remarkable for piety, have been as remarkable for ſufferings. I might inſtance in many of the faithful ſervants of God, under the Old Teſtament as well as under the new. I might inſtance in Jacob, in Moſes, in David, in the prophet Jeremiah, in the apoſtle Paul, and many of the primitive chriſtians and martyrs; who were expoſed to all manner of afflictions and troubles in this world, were variouſly exerciſed with one ſorrow after another. And here is a very remarkable inſtance in the caſe of Job, who cries out moſt bitterly of the greatneſs of his trouble and affliction. There is no language can expreſs, how great the calamity of Job may well be thought to have been, under all thoſe miſeries that we are told befel him. There are indeed ſome of the righteous; nay, there are many of them, that paſs their days free from abundance of troubles and calamities, which have befallen others. But however, 'tis no uncommon thing for the righteous to be expoſed to great afflictions in this world. There are many ſorrows and troubles of the world, that befal the righteous in common with other men; and then there are others peculiar to them and to their own circumſtances: and further, there are ſome perſons, ſingled out from among the reſt, to be made remarkable inſtances of affliction;

affliction ; that the grace of God may be the more eminently manifeſted in their ſupport ; and that the holineſs, and purity, the humility, and patience, and reſignation of their minds, might be more clearly diſcerned, to render them examples for the imitation of others.

But beſides, I ſay, that there are ſome perſons diſtinguiſhed by extraordinary afflictions ; 'tis common for men to have trouble and ſorrow in this life, tho ſome have much more than others ; and good men in particular, they have ſorrows, ſuch as are common to others. Their bodies are expoſed to diſeaſes as well as thoſe of other men. They are oblig'd to *get their bread in the ſweat of their brow* [h], with great toil and uneaſineſs as well as the reſt of mankind. They are expoſed to the ſame want and pain, the ſame frailty and mortality ; their minds are capable of being impreſs'd with trouble and ſorrow after the ſame manner, generally ſpeaking, as other men. They meet with croſſes in the world, with poverty and diſtreſs, with the unkindneſs and ingratitude of friends and children. Their dear relations and friends are taken away from them after the ſame common manner. They have trouble and anguiſh on all thoſe accounts, wherein the minds of men may be naturally touched and

[h] Gen. 3. 19.

impreſs'd with ſorrow; and ſo, as the wiſe man obſerves, *there is no difference between the righteous and the wicked*, generally ſpeaking; *what happens to the one, happens to the other* [i]; tho, indeed, the righteous are capable of bearing theſe ſorrows after another manner than the wicked. But God's love and hatred are not known by theſe things under the ſun: his providence is pleaſed to afflict us after the manner of the reſt of mankind, in thoſe general and common inſtances; and therefore we ſhould not murmur or repine at God's providence, but remember that there is *no ſtrange affliction happens to us*, when theſe things befal us, *but ſuch as is common to men* [k].

But then the godly have many times peculiar afflictions and diſtreſſes, and ſo their ſorrow is greater than that of others. Good men are conſiderate, they make uſe of their reaſon, and exerciſe themſelves in thought and reflection; for 'tis impoſſible to be religious without conſideration, and making reflection on our own actions and circumſtances, and thoſe of others. The wicked, they are amuſed with abundance of vain appearances of things; they don't give themſelves time to think on their ways, as the righteous do: *I thought on my ways*, ſays the pſalmiſt; *and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies* [l]. The fancies of wicked men

[i] Eccleſ. 9. 1, 2, 3.
[k] 1 Cor. 10. 13.
[l] Pſal. 119. 59.

are taken with the vain ſhew of temporal things; and they are pleaſed and flattered with theſe, and don't care to give themſelves time to conſider the reaſon of things, and to aim at that ſatisfaction and joy which infinitely ſurpaſſes all ſenſual delight: and therefore the reaſon why they ſometimes ſeem not to have the trouble that other perſons have, is, becauſe they don't make uſe of their underſtandings: theſe perſons are known by their gay and frolick humour. If they were capable of making a due reflection upon things, they would, by their *increaſing knowledge*, *increaſe their ſorrow* [m].

When pious men conſider the degeneracy of the world, the univerſal corruption of *mankind*; how *all fleſh have corrupted their way* [n], and *the whole world lieth in the wicked one* [o]; how fooliſh and vain men are, labouring like mad men *for that which doth not profit* [p], nay labouring to deſtroy themſelves, purſuing eagerly thoſe pleaſures that will be the bane of their ſouls: when they conſider what ſin deſerves at the hand of God, and what miſery is coming upon their impenitent fellow creatures: this gives them abundance of trouble and ſorrow. Their ſympathy with thoſe that are in affliction, their charity and tenderneſs for others in diſtreſs, make them great ſharers

[m] Eccleſ. 1. 18.
[n] Gen. 6. 12.
[o] 1 John 5. 19. ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ.
[p] Iſa. 55. 2.

in it themſelves. While the ungodly are amuſed with the pleaſures and delights of ſenſe, their regard to the honour of God when they hear his ſacred name profan'd, touches them with abundance of affliction and pain. They weep over the ſins and follies, and deplore the miſeries that attend mankind, as our Saviour did over Jeruſalem [q]. Thus they increaſe their ſorrow, by their love to God and charity to men, by their viewing of things after a more advantageous manner than other men; by theſe things their ſorrow is increaſed and multiplied. And they have not only peculiar occaſion of trouble on this account; but when they look into the ſtate of their own ſouls, they have a great deal of ſorrow and affliction. Tho they have ſome cauſe of joy to find their ſouls in another condition than thoſe of other men, or than they themſelves formerly were; yet they can't chuſe but cry out, *O wretched men that we are, who ſhall deliver us from this body of death* [r]!

When they conſider that *with them, even with them are iniquities againſt the Lord their God* [f]; when they conſider the rule of their duty, and the motives that religion affords for their encouragement in the diſcharge of it, and particularly the examples

[q] Luke 19. 41.
[r] Rom. 7. 24.
[f] 2 Chron. 28. 10.

that

that are ſet them by *ſo great a cloud of witneſſes* as the ſaints in all ages have been, and the perfect pattern of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf; this muſt needs give good men very ſorrowful reflections, that they fall ſo much ſhort of many who have gone before them; that there ſhould be any thing in them oppoſite to the divine will, that they ſhould be ungrateful to that God to whom they owe all the bleſſings they enjoy, or can poſſibly expect; that ever they ſhould caſt the leaſt contempt upon the divine word; that they ſhould not reverence the law of God as they ought, which is ſo excellent in itſelf, and calculated for their own trueſt intereſt; or that they ſhould in any reſpect neglect ſo great a ſalvation, as that which is freely offer'd to them in the goſpel.

And they have likewiſe troubles from without, from the temptations of Satan, who is a ſubtle adverſary. He rages with fury againſt thoſe that are in any tolerable meaſure conformable to the will of God. He is *the accuſer of the brethren* [s]; his malice and rage are bent againſt them. You know how greatly the apoſtle Paul was afflicted, when *a meſſenger of Satan was ſent to buffet him* [t]. Wicked men likewiſe who are the inſtruments of the devil, they oftentimes perſecute the righteous. 'Tis no ſtrange

[s] Rev. 12. 10. | [t] 2 Cor. 12. 7.

thing in the world for good men to be perſecuted by others; there are a multitude of inſtances of this kind in the holy ſcripture: and ſince the ſcripture has been written, ſucceeding generations declare the great perſecution the church of God has met with from the hands of wicked men. The apoſtle Paul elegantly deſcribes his own ſufferings in 2 Cor. 11. What troubles from friends and enemies, what perils by ſea and by land, what a ſcene of ſorrows does he repreſent to us, beſides the care of all the churches, the ſympathy he had with others that were in ſorrow and affliction? A multitude of examples there are of this kind; tho indeed the apoſtle was an inſtance of the higheſt rank. There will be perſecution while there are wicked men in the world: and if they are reſtrained from exerting their anger and fury, after the moſt violent manner; however by their ſlanders, by their bitter ſcoffs, and their cruel mockings, by ſuch means and ways as they are capable of, they will be ſhewing their ſpite againſt the church of God, and againſt thoſe that are truly religious. This often happens in the world; and in the caſe of Job particularly, you find what I have ſaid, was in a remarkable manner verified. 'Tis true he was once in a proſperous condition: but when poverty and contempt came upon him, and when he was deſpiſed by thoſe that were vaſtly his inferiors, when he was laught at and

ſcorned

ſcorned by the meaneſt of the people; you will acknowledge that his affliction was very great. Not only to have his ſubſtance taken from him in an inſtant, but to have his whole family ſnatched away, and his children taken under ſuch circumſtances as might make the trouble the greater; for he was afraid they would ſin againſt God, at thoſe meetings they had to eat and drink together: to have oppreſſors deſtroy his ſervants with the ſword, and take away his cattel from him: to have the wicked trouble him after this manner, beſides, the reflections that were made in his own mind, as well as in the ſpeeches of his friends concerning the providence of God, which put him to a non-plus, and drew many a dolorous ſigh from his breaſt, and many a ſad lamentation from his lips: to have ſo great an affliction, as to be delivered, as it were, into the hands of Satan; to have weary days and reſtleſs nights; and at the ſame time that thoſe who ſhould comfort his ſoul, ſhould aggravate his miſery, by charging him with hypocriſy; and that the wife of his boſom ſhould tempt him after ſo terrible a manner in the midſt of his ſufferings, inſtead of exhorting him to patience and tranquility: that he ſhould be thus tormented in his body and in his mind: all theſe things ſerve to verify what has been ſaid, that pious men are ſometimes expoſed to great afflictions in this world. I do not ſay they are always

always ſo expoſed, but ſometimes they are expoſed to very great and remarkable afflictions; as was the caſe of Job.

Before I proceed to the next head, it ſeems a little neceſſary, that I ſhould vindicate the providence of God, and take off the objection that might be made by profane perſons, who may be ready to ſay, if God approved of righteous men, he would never expoſe them ſo to afflictions in this life; and take off likewiſe what may be objected by good men, who might lay claim to the promiſes of this life, as well as of that to come.

As for the former ſort, thoſe who profanely declare that 'tis not worth their while to be righteous, and count it a wearineſs to ſerve God, becauſe *they that work wickedneſs are ſet up* [v], and the righteous are *chaſtened every morning* [u]; 'tis enough to anſwer them, if they were told that theſe are but *light afflictions* [w], and *but for a moment*, and *not to be compared with that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* [x], which is reſerved for them: that God does it to prepare them for heaven and glory. This is enough to anſwer what the profane can ſay: for certainly the enjoyment of the preſence of God, in a ſtate of everlaſting felicity, will make full amends for all the temporal afflictions they can endure.

[v] Mal. 3. 15.
[u] Pſal. 73. 14.
[w] 2 Cor. 4. 17.
[x] Rom. 8. 18.

To

To anſwer the other, how is this conſiſtent with the promiſes that are made to the righteous, of the good things of this life, as well as of that to come? I anſwer,

1. That we muſt interpret thoſe promiſes that relate to the things of this life, as we do proverbs; that generally ſpeaking, theſe things are true. And ſo, generally ſpeaking, good men have the bleſſings of this life; various bleſſings, which God gives in return of their prayers, and as a reward of their piety and charity in this life: while there are often remarkable puniſhments that attend the workers of iniquity. It may be diſcern'd, that while multitudes are reduced to extreme poverty, and ſo rendred very miſerable, the pſalmiſt ſays, *I never ſaw the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread*[y]. Not but that ſome of theſe may be poor: but he ſeems to mean there, by *the righteous*, the charitable man; or however it may be interpreted as a proverbial ſpeech; *I never ſaw the righteous*, that is, in my obſervation it has not happened that righteous men are expoſed to extreme indigence and want, or that their children are remarkably poor. A few inſtances will not hinder a proverb from taking place; and ſo the pſalmiſt may be interpreted as ſpeaking proverbially. But,

2. We are moreover to obſerve, that as it

[y] Pſal. 37. 25.

does

does not ordinarily happen, that the righteous are expoſed to greater afflictions than other men; ſo we muſt not ſo aggravate the miſeries of the righteous, as to think they are greater than thoſe of the wicked, but weigh them in an equal ballance: and we ſhall find it much more happy for the righteous in this world, generally ſpeaking, than for the wicked. As for the wicked: conſtant obſervation diſcovers that they are compaſſed with many troubles and ſorrows in this life; and as they are *treacherous dealers* themſelves, ſo they are often *dealt with* by others. They have beſides this, the agitation of their own minds, while they are harraſs'd with their cries: they are *like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt* [z]. Whereas the righteous, if they are expoſed to diſappointments in this world, they know how to calm their paſſions, that theſe troubles don't diſconcert them after ſuch a manner. Moreover when the wicked enjoy what they ſeek, they find themſelves yet diſappointed, and there is not in the enjoyment what they expected: beſides this, they waſte their eſtates, weaken their conſtitutions, and bring pains and diſeaſes upon themſelves by their intemperance; and thus God's judgments often overtake them for their ſins in this world. And therefore as to the common afflictions of

[z] Iſa. 57. 20.

life,

life, the wicked are much more troubled than the righteous: tho they are expoſed to afflictions, yet their manner of living, renders them more ſecure than the ungodly. Peace of conſcience, and joy of their innocency, give them pleaſure and ſatisfaction, even when they recieve but little from the hand of God. The righteous thank God, as Job did under his afflictions, and bleſs his name; and tho ſometimes their minds are diſcompoſed, yet they recover themſelves, and can ſay, *return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee* [a]. When a righteous man is ſtripp'd of the things of this world, ſuppoſe that his calamity be as great as that of Job was, yet he has the proſpect of a bleſſed reſurrection and a future ſtate of happineſs: and this makes his preſent *afflictions* ſeem *light*, as they are *but for a moment*, and becauſe *they work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* [b]. But it is impoſſible for me in a ſhort diſcourſe to enumerate to you, the various things that alleviate the troubles of the righteous, and aggravate thoſe of the wicked: nor indeed is it needful; ſince generally ſpeaking, 'tis plain, that *godlineſs has the promiſe of this life* [c]. Generally ſpeaking, I ſay, the thing will hold good, that the righteous are in this life bleſt of God, and enjoy many

[a] Pſal. 116. 7.
[b] 2 Cor. 4. 17.
[c] 1 Tim. 4. 8.

promiſes

promiſes that render their condition abundantly more eligible than that of the wicked. However this muſt be granted, as we have obſerved already; that ſometimes God has made righteous men very remarkable for affliction, that they might be extraordinary examples of holineſs; and that ſuch inſtances might ſupport others; and that he might engage ſuch perſons the more to eye the future recompence. And here is an eminent inſtance in Job; tho afflicted in ſo extraordinary a manner in this world, God was pleaſed to turn back his captivity, to multiply to him temporal bleſſings, to give him the ſame number of children, to double the number of his cattel, and of all his ſubſtance, to give him twice as much as he had before, and to furniſh his ſoul with an extraordinary degree of grace: thus his proſperous condition in the end of his life, will ſerve, in a particular manner, to juſtify the providence of God towards him. But I proceed,

II. To ſhew that death terminates the troubles and afflictions of the righteous. It is not ſo with the wicked, for they are troubled in the future ſtate, in another world; when their bodies reſt in their graves, their ſouls are expoſed to the divine judgment. *The* wicked *rich man died, and was carried into hell*; *and the* righteous *beggar died* alſo, *and was carried by angels into Abraham's bo-*

ſom:

boſom [d] : which ſhews when men dye, their ſouls are differently diſpoſed of ; the ſouls of the righteous are tranſlated to a ſtate of happineſs, and the ſouls of the wicked to a ſtate of miſery. I need not now take occaſion to prove to you the immortality of the ſoul, which is ſo frequently inſiſted on in the holy ſcripture. When the apoſtle *deſires to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord* [e] ; that one text is a plain proof of it.

But good men's ſorrows are terminated when they come to die: they have no affliction but in this life ; death puts a period to all their calamities. When the ſoul is ſeparated from the body, there is an end of every painful ſenſation that neceſſarily attended its union with it ; there is no wearineſs, no ſorrow or trouble, upon the account of any thing that befals the body.

And then, as for internal ſorrows ; the ſtate of reſt which the ſoul enjoys in the preſence of God, renders it free from every thing of that kind. *God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain: for the former things are paſſed away* [f]. How can it indeed be conſiſtent with that happy ſtate, that the ſoul ſhould be in any kind of diſtreſs?

[d] Luke 16. 22, 23.
[e] 2 Cor. 5. 8.
[f] Rev. 21. 4.

The

The enjoyment of the love and favour of God, and ſuch a view of the divine perfections, as good men enjoy in that ſtate, muſt needs free their ſpirits from all trouble and anguiſh, and render them truly and ſubſtantially happy: tho 'tis true, the conſummation of this happineſs ſhall be when body and ſoul are reunited.

'Tis not ſo with the wicked. When they die, however their bodies are at reſt, their ſouls are expoſed to great miſery and torment; and therefore death is ſo much abhorred by them, and they chuſe rather to live under great pain and miſery, than to *paſs through the valley of the ſhadow of death* [g]; becauſe they have reaſon to fear the dreadful puniſhment that awaits them.

But I proceed,

III. To obſerve that death is eligible to the righteous ſometimes, and deſired by them. When they are oppreſſed with great ſorrows and afflictions, they long to be at reſt: and accordingly we find Job earneſtly deſired it; as in this chapter, ſo likewiſe in the 10th chapter of this book. *My ſoul is weary of my life, I will leave my complaint upon myſelf; I will ſpeak in the bitterneſs of my ſoul* [h]. So likewiſe in chap. 16. *But now he hath made me weary: thou haſt made deſolate all my company* [i]. Which may be

[g] Pſal. 23. 4.
[h] *ver.* 1.
[i] *ver.* 7.

interpreted

interpreted alſo of his being weary of his life. And chap. 6. ver. 8. where he more largely and ſtrongly expreſſes his deſire to die: *O that I might have my requeſt! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would pleaſe God to deſtroy me; that he would let looſe his hand and cut me off, &c.* And chap. 7. ver. 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days alſo as the days of an hireling? &c.* The prophet Elijah, tho he had it revealed to him from heaven that he ſhould be tranſlated, yet when he is perſecuted and oppreſſed, he prays that he might die: *Lord*, ſays he, *now take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers* [k]; "therefore why "ſhould I paſs into heaven after an extraor- "dinary manner." Job indeed paſſionately wiſhes for this; and perhaps with too earneſt a deſire, on the account of his great afflictions. But the apoſtle Paul deſired *to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt* [l], not ſo much becauſe of the great troubles he underwent here, as the great felicity he expected when his ſoul ſhould be ſeparate from his body. But however, this ought to be cautiouſly conſidered. 'Tis a thing often deſired by perſons, who if they were in the view of death, would moſt paſſionately deſire to live. Some under trouble will wiſh they were dead, without conſidering the

[k] 1 Kings 19. 4. [l] Phil. 1. 23. 2 Cor. 5.

conſequence of ſuch a change. Some of the Stoick philoſophers were deſirous to live under the greateſt pain and torment; and this ſeems to have been from the apprehenſion they had, that there might be ſome extraordinary change, diſadvantageous to them, when they paſs'd out of this world. But to deſire death rationally, it muſt be conſidered that it ſhould be always with ſubmiſſion to the divine will: as our Saviour when he would deſire that *the cup* of his ſufferings *might paſs from him*; *not*, ſays he, *my will, but thine be done* [m]. And the apoſtle Paul ſuppoſes this was lawful, when he hardly knew which to chooſe, when he was *in a ſtate betwixt two* [n]: but ſtill this ſuppoſes that 'twas lawful to deſire the one or the other, only with a ſubmiſſion to the divine will.

Again, as when we do it with ſubmiſſion to God's will, 'tis one good character of the lawfulneſs of it; ſo likewiſe when 'tis out of a good end and deſign; and not as when people commonly wiſh it, that they may be rid of a preſent trouble only. The wicked don't deſire to be out of this world, becauſe they would be free from the ſin and corruption of the world; but that they might have preſent eaſe, immediate deliverance from ſome preſent calamity. Whereas a pious man, when he has a regard to a future ſtate, and deſires to paſs out of this

[m] Mat. 26. 39. | [n] Phil. 1. 23.

world

world into it, 'tis that he may be free from all pollution, as well as ſorrow. And as a good man ought to be contented to live, that he may be capable of rendering ſervice to God; ſo 'tis lawful to deſire to die, that we may be advanced to a perfect ſtate of holineſs, whenever God has no farther ſervice to employ us in, in this world. I ſhall not determine what regard Job might have to theſe circumſtances or reſtrictions.

I come now to make a little improvement of what has been ſaid, and ſo to conclude. And,

1. If ſometimes good men are greatly afflicted in this world, meet with many ſorrows and troubles, as the holy ſcripture and experience ſhew that they do; this ſhould caution us againſt imagining that the righteous are in a worſe condition than the wicked; ſince this is ſo conſiſtent with God's goodneſs and mercy, and ſince the righteous, generally ſpeaking, enjoy more bleſſings than the wicked. Let us therefore not be prejudiced againſt religion; but acknowledge with the apoſtle, that *godlineſs has the promiſe of this life, and of that which is to come* [o]. And, on the other hand, we ſhould have a care that we don't condemn the generation of the juſt, that we do not condemn righteous perſons, becauſe ſome remarkable

[o] 1 Tim. 4. 8.

afflictions have befallen them; becauſe ſuch a man's affairs have been blaſted, becauſe ſuch calamity has befallen any of his children, becauſe he is become ſuddenly poor, or has many enemies and perſecutors. Let us take heed of cenſuring on theſe occaſions; leſt we become like the friends of Job, leſt we ſpeak injudiciouſly concerning this matter, and leſt inſtead of comforting we ſhould grieve the ſouls of them which God would not have afflicted by us [p]. And let us have a care of judging of God's *love or hatred by what we ſee under the ſun* [q]. Let us rather judge of a man's piety, and goodneſs, and holineſs, and purity, by his words and actions, by the manner of his converſation, than by the providential diſpenſations that do attend him.

2. If pious men are expoſed to great afflictions in this life ſometimes; let this comfort them however, that they have a proſpect of releaſe, and that it ſhall not be ſo with them in the world to come. Here things are diſpenſed after ſuch a manner, that *we can't know love or hatred by the things that are before us.* But however, happy are the righteous, becauſe *it ſhall be well with them* [r], upon all accounts in a future ſtate.

3. This ſhews the folly and vanity of the wicked: who becauſe they ſee ſome good

[p] Ezek. 13. 22.
[q] Eccleſ. 9. 1.
[r] Iſa. 3. 10.

men

men afflicted, becauſe all manner of temporal bleſſings don't attend them, do preſently take up with this notion, that 'tis a vain thing to be righteous; whereas they ſhould rather form a judgment from the general conduct of God's providence, than from ſome ſuch particular inſtance.

4. If there are various troubles and afflictions ſometimes, that befal the righteous in this world; this ſhould fortify us againſt them. If we are poor and indigent, if our friends deal ungratefully with us, if we loſe our deareſt relations, if the multitude of our bones be chaſtened with ſtrong pain, if we have often clouds upon our ſpirits; let us not *charge God fooliſhly* [r], nor complain of the conduct of his providence: it becomes us to be ſilent. We ſhould ſay with Job, *the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, bleſſed be the name of the Lord* [s]. We are all *as clay in the hand of the potter* [t]: he will do nothing with us but what is juſtifiable; nay, he will *make all things work together for the good of them that love him* [u]: therefore we have great reaſon to be reſigned to his will. Let us have a care of complaining as Jonah did, who *wiſhed he might die*, becauſe the ſun beat upon his head [v]. We are not to repine at the providence of God, becauſe he afflicts us, but to ſay with

[r] Job 1. 22.
[s] *ver.* 21.
[t] Iſa. 64. 8.
[u] Rom. 8. 28.
[v] Jonah 4. 8.

the pſalmiſt, *in very faithfulneſs thou doſt afflict me*[w]. He knows what is beſt to do with us, and for us: and he will do every thing for the good of them that fear him, as well as for the glory of his own name.

5. If death terminates the troubles and ſorrows of good men; then certainly this ſhould make us uphold ourſelves with patience. It is but a little while, and we ſhall meet our bleſſed Saviour: our ſouls will be made happy; and our bodies will will be in a ſtate of reſt till the time of the reſurrection. What if our lives were to be protracted to many hundred years? would not our troubles be multiplied in proportion? but God has ſhortened the days of man upon earth ſince the beginning: and this is in mercy to the righteous. Often-times they are *taken away from the evil to come*[x]; which evil others ſee: and when their lives are moſt extended, 'tis but a little time that they have to be in this world. How ſharp ſoever our pains and troubles are, if we are truly religious, we may comfort ourſelves with this conſideration, 'tis but a little time, and a period will be put to all our miſeries and afflictions.

6. What a happineſs is this to the righteous, that death which is ſo terrible to the

[w] Pſal. 119. 75. | [x] Iſa. 57. 1.

wicked,

wicked, is become ſo much leſs formidable, nay, is become even deſireable to them? The moſt proſperous of the wicked, what a ſad change will they find, when they paſs into another world? the righteous then ceaſe from being troubled, but the wicked will be tormented for ever. *The weary* righteous will *be at reſt* after all the labour and toil they have gone through, and the oppreſſions they have endured in this world: but the wicked, who have been *wearying themſelves for every vanity* [y]; theſe muſt be tormented for ever and ever. What a vaſt difference is there between the ſtate of the one and the other?

7. This ſhould comfort us concerning our pious friends and relations, when they paſs out of this world. 'Tis true, we may, and ought to be ſorrowful at their departure: 'tis unnatural and brutiſh not to be moved on ſuch occaſions. God does not require that we ſhould be ſtupid: he deſigns we ſhould conſider the ſtroke of his hand, and be ſuitably affected with it. He teaches us by this, the vanity of the world; and puts us in mind how frail we are, that we may *number our own days, and apply our hearts to wiſdom* [z]. But then we are *not to ſorrow as thoſe without hope* [a], when there is occaſion for us juſtly to conclude that our

[y] Hab. 2. 13. Pſal. 90. 12.

[a] 1 Theſ. 4. 13.

friends are happy, who are paſſed into their eternal ſtate. We mourn becauſe we loved their company, and the advantages we received from their converſation while on earth: but if we loved them, we ſhould ſurely have ſome comfort, and ſatisfaction, in the conſideration of the happineſs and joy into which they are entered. They are there, where there is no trouble, no ſorrow, where tears are wiped from all eyes. Our hearts perhaps are deeply touched: but it ſhould be ſome alleviation of our ſorrow, when we conſider that tho they are gone from us, they are entered into a ſtate of perfect reſt and tranquility; where they have no more complaints upon the account of the violence of bodily diſeaſes, or diſtreſſes of the mind. There is indeed great occaſion of joy, when we have reaſon to conclude, that they are aſcended into that glory and felicity, where no pains, no diſeaſes, no kind of affliction ſhall ever hinder or interrupt the ſervice of God in which they are employ'd, nor their enjoyment of him. And then we ſhould conſider the doctrine of the reſurrection. What comfort ſhould that afford us, that thoſe bodies which moulder into duſt, ſhall be raiſed by the glorious power of the Redeemer? *Comfort one another with theſe words* [b], ſays the apoſtle: *and do not ſorrow like thoſe that have no hope* [c].

[b] 1 Theſ. 4. 18. [c] *ver.* 13.

And

And indeed we have occaſion to be comforted, on the account of our deceaſed friend, who deſired this text ſhould be inſiſted on amongſt you after his diſſolution. We have occaſion, I ſay, to be comforted on his account. As we have reaſon to believe he was a perſon of piety and religion; ſo ſome of us knew that he was deſirous to be diſſolved, that he might have that reſt and tranquility, that repoſe and refreſhment, which ſeems to be aimed at by Job, in the words of our text, *where the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and where the weary be at reſt.* He was not indeed afflicted as Job was, tho he had a conſiderable meaſure of trials in this world. He had been cruelly and maliciouſly perſecuted, tho God was pleaſed to give him deliverance, for which he was very thankful throughout the remainder of his time. He had affliction enough in this world, to be weaned from it, and to be weary of it: and he had a ſufficient proſpect of the glory and happineſs of the righteous, through the merits of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, joyfully to look into the other world; with well-grounded comfort to conſider that he ſhould paſs into a ſtate *where the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and where the weary be at reſt.* It was his great advantage to have the exerciſe of his reaſon, to the end of his life: and he acknowledged it as a particular favour from God, that he ſhould have the free exerciſe

of

of that faculty under his laſt weakneſs; that his mind ſhould not be ſo diſcompoſed by any pain or violent torment, with which many others are exerciſed in ſickneſs; but that ſtill he had the opportunity of comforting himſelf, by reflection on the divine favour in time paſt, and in remembring thoſe promiſes wherein God had made him to hope. Tho he ſeemed not to have extraordinary tranſports of joy, yet he maintained a ſweet calmneſs and ſedateneſs of mind: and if he regreted on any account, it was that he wanted the opportunity to wait upon God in his publick worſhip, which he conſtantly attended while he was capable, until the diſtemper under which he laboured obtained ſo far upon him, that he could enjoy that advantage no longer. However, I ſay, he had that repoſe and calm in his mind that was very deſireable; and ſeemed entirely reſigned to the will of God, *to wait all the days of his appointed time, till his change ſhould come* [d].

And happy ſhall we be, if we imitate the examples of all good men, ſo that we may expect death after ſuch a manner, as may not fill our ſouls with fear and terror, but rather with joy at laſt, however with quietneſs and repoſe of mind. The way to expect death without terror, is to do the work of our generation faithfully; ſo to

[d] Job 14. 14.

live

live as to have reſpect to a future ſtate, and to make the buſineſs of this world ſubſerve the intereſt of our ſouls with relation to another: ſo to behave ourſelves under all affliction, and pain, as to be reſigned to the will of God, till he ſhall looſe our bonds, and bring us into a ſtate of glorious liberty, ſatisfaction, and tranquility. 'Tis worth the while to be religious, conſidering the happy conſequences of it in the joy of a good conſcience: but how much more on the account of the great bleſſings that will be beſtowed upon the righteous hereafter? We ſhould therefore be comforted under all our afflictions; both in the loſs of our relations and friends, and whatever other troubles do attend us: and remember them *whoſe converſation has been as becomes the goſpel*, that we may *follow their faith* [e], that ſo we may *enter into* that *joy of our Lord* [f], into which they are enter'd.

[e] Heb. 13. 7. | [f] Mat. 25. 21.

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